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NARRATIVE

OF THE

LIFE OF SIR WALTER SCOTT, BART.

NARRATIVE

OF THE LIFE

OF

SIR WALTER SCOTT, BART.

BEGUN BY HIMSELF AND CONTINUED BY

J. G. LOCKHART, ESQ.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOLUME I.

ROBERT CADELL, EDINBURGH;
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PREFACE.

THE closing pages of this book will explain the transaction from which it sprung. When in May 1847 the publisher of Sir Walter Scott's Works proposed to take to himself the whole remaining Copyright in them, he stipulated that I should prepare an abridgment of the Memoirs of the Author, originally comprised in seven volumes, and since reprinted in various forms. If I had been to consult my own feelings, I should have been more willing to produce an enlarged edition: for the interest of Sir Walter's history lies, I think, even peculiarly, in its minute details—especially in the details set down by himself in his Letters and Diaries; and, of course, after the lapse of ten years, more copious use might be made of those materials without offence or indecorum. Mr Cadell, however, considered that a book of smaller bulk, embracing only what may be called more strictly narrative, might be acceptable to certain classes of readers: and the manner in which this gentleman had throughout conducted himself towards Sir Walter, his family, and his memory—together with other circumstances on which it is not necessary to say more—overcame my reluctance.

It will be understood that whenever the narrative now given at all differs from that of the larger book, I have been endeavouring to profit by letters recently communicated.

J. G. L.

LONDON, *4th August* 1848.

LIFE OF SIR WALTER SCOTT.

CHAPTER I.

MEMOIR OF HIS EARLY YEARS, WRITTEN BY HIMSELF.

Ashestiel, April 26th, 1808.

THE present age has discovered a desire, or rather a rage, for literary anecdote and private history, that may be well permitted to alarm one who has engaged in a certain degree the attention of the public. That I have had more than my own share of popularity, my contemporaries will be as ready to admit as I am to confess that its measure has exceeded not only my hopes, but my merits, and even wishes. I may be therefore permitted, without an extraordinary degree of vanity, to take the precaution of recording a few leading circumstances (they do not merit the name of events) of a very quiet and uniform life—that, should my literary reputation survive my temporal existence, the public may know from good authority all that they are entitled to know of an individual who has contributed to their amusement.

From the lives of some poets a most important moral lesson may doubtless be derived, and few sermons can be read with so much profit as the Memoirs of Burns, of Chatterton, or of Savage. Were I conscious of any thing peculiar in my own moral character which could render such developement necessary or useful, I would as readily

consent to it as I would bequeath my body to dissection, if the operation could tend to point out the nature and the means of curing any peculiar malady. But as my habits of thinking and acting, as well as my rank in society, were fixed long before I had attained, or even pretended to, any poetical reputation,[1] and as it produced, when acquired, no remarkable change upon either, it is hardly to be expected that much information can be derived from minutely investigating frailties, follies, or vices, not very different in number or degree from those of other men in my situation. As I have not been blessed with the talents of Burns or Chatterton, I have been happily exempted from the influence of their violent passions, exasperated by the struggle of feelings which rose up against the unjust decrees of fortune. Yet, although I cannot tell of difficulties vanquished, and distance of rank annihilated by the strength of genius, those who shall hereafter read this little Memoir may find in it some hints to be improved, for the regulation of their own minds, or the training those of others.

Every Scottishman has a pedigree. It is a national prerogative, as unalienable as his pride and his poverty.

[1] I do not mean to say that my success in literature has not led me to mix familiarly in society much above my birth and original pretensions, since I have been readily received in the first circles in Britain. But there is a certain intuitive knowledge of the world, to which most well-educated Scotchmen are early trained, that prevents them from being much dazzled by this species of elevation. A man who to good nature adds the general rudiments of good breeding, provided he rest contented with a simple and unaffected manner of behaving and expressing himself, will never be ridiculous in the best society, and, so far as his talents and information permit, may be an agreeable part of the company. I have therefore never felt much elevated, nor did I experience any violent change in situation, by the passport which my poetical character afforded me into higher company than my birth warranted.—1826.

My birth was neither distinguished nor sordid. According to the prejudices of my country, it was esteemed *gentle*, as I was connected, though remotely, with ancient families both by my father's and mother's side. My father's grandfather was Walter Scott, well known in Teviotdale by the surname of *Beardie*. He was the second son of Walter Scott, first Laird of Raeburn, who was third son of Sir William Scott, and the grandson of Walter Scott, commonly called in tradition *Auld Watt* of Harden. I am therefore lineally descended from that ancient chieftain, whose name I have made to ring in many a ditty, and from his fair dame, the Flower of Yarrow—no bad genealogy for a Border minstrel.[1] *Beardie*, my great-grandfather aforesaid, derived his cognomen from a venerable beard, which he wore unblemished by razor or scissors, in token

[1] [In whom the male representation of the old Scotts of Buccleuch is now vested, there is great dispute among heraldic writers,—some upholding the claim of Lord Napier, the male heir of the Scotts of Thirlestane,—others that of Lord Polwarth, head of what was always considered, in point of importance, the second family of the clan, viz., the Scotts of Harden, originally designed Scotts of Sinton. Of his ancestors of this branch, Sir Walter has recorded many anecdotes in the notes to the Border Minstrelsy, the Lay of the last Minstrel, and elsewhere. In conversation he often alluded to the remarkable circumstance of two of them having been lame, and, nevertheless, both especially distinguished by the old rhythmical chronicler of the clan, Scott of Satchells (1688), who says of the first,—

> "It is four hundred winters past in order
> Since that Buccleuch was Warden in the Border;
> A son he had at that same tide,
> Which was so lame could neither run nor ride.
> John, this lame, if my author speaks true,
> He sent him to St Mungo's in Glasgu,
> Where he remained a scholar's time,
> Then he married a wife according to his mind. . . .
> And betwixt them twa they did procreat
> Headshaw, Askirk, SINTON, and Glack."

But, if the scholarship of *John the Lamiter* furnished his descendant with many a mirthful allusion, a far greater favourite was the

of his regret for the banished dynasty of Stuart. It would have been well that his zeal had stopped there. But he took arms, and intrigued in their cause, until he lost all he had in the world, and, as I have heard, run a narrow risk of being hanged, had it not been for the interference of Anne, Duchess of Buccleuch and Monmouth. Beardie's elder brother, William Scott of Raeburn, my great-granduncle, was killed about the age of twenty-one, in a duel with Pringle of Crichton, grandfather of the present Mark Pringle of Clifton. They fought with swords, as was the fashion of the time, in a field near Selkirk, called from the catastrophe the *Raeburn Meadow-spot*. Pringle fled from Scotland to Spain, and was long a captive and slave in Barbary. *Beardie* became, of course, *Tutor of Raeburn*, as the old Scottish phrase called him—that is, guardian to his infant nephew, father of the present Walter Scott of Raeburn. He also managed the estates of Makerstoun, being nearly related to that family by his mother, Isobel MacDougal. I suppose he had some allowance for his care in either case, and subsisted upon that and the fortune which he had by his wife, a Miss Campbell of Silvercraigs, in the west, through which connexion my father used to *call cousin*, as they say, with the Campbells of Blythswood. Beardie was a man of some learning, and a friend of Dr Pitcairn, to whom his politics probably made him acceptable. They had a Tory or Jacobite club in Edinburgh, in which the conversation is said to have been maintained in Latin.

memory of *William the Boltfoot*, who followed him in the sixth generation.

> "The Laird and Lady of Harden
> Betwixt them procreat was a son
> Called William Boltfoot of Harden—
> *He did survive to be* A MAN.

He was, in fact, one of the "prowest knights" of the whole genealogy—a fearless horseman and expert spearsman, renowned and dreaded.—ED.]

He left three sons. The eldest, Walter, had a family, of which any that now remain have been long settled in America :—the male heirs are long since extinct. The third was William, father of James Scott, well known in India as one of the original settlers of Prince of Wales island. The second, Robert Scott, was my grandfather. He was originally bred to the sea; but, being shipwrecked near Dundee in his trial-voyage, he took such a sincere dislike to that element, that he could not be persuaded to a second attempt. This occasioned a quarrel beween him and his father, who left him to shift for himself. Robert was one of those active spirits to whom this was no misfortune. He turned Whig upon the spot, and fairly abjured his father's politics, and his learned poverty. His chief and relative, Mr Scott of Harden, gave him a lease of the farm of Sandy-Knowe, comprehending the rocks in the centre of which Smailholm or Sandy-Knowe Tower is situated. He took for his shepherd an old man called Hogg, who willingly lent him, out of respect to his family, his whole savings, about £30, to stock the new farm. With this sum, which it seems was at the time sufficient for the purpose, the master and servant set off to purchase a stock of sheep at Whitsun-Tryste, a fair held on a hill near Wooler in Northumberland. The old shepherd went carefully from drove to drove, till he found a *hirsel* likely to answer their purpose, and then returned to tell his master to come up and conclude the bargain. But what was his surprise to see him galloping a mettled hunter about the race-course, and to find he had expended the whole stock in this extraordinary purchase!—Moses's bargain of green spectacles did not strike more dismay into the Vicar of Wakefield's family, than my grandfather's rashness into the poor old shepherd. The thing, however, was irretrievable, and they returned without the sheep. In the course of a few days, however, my grandfather, who was one of the best horsemen of his time, attended John Scott

of Harden's hounds on this same horse, and displayed him to such advantage that he sold him for double the original price. The farm was now stocked in earnest; and the rest of my grandfather's career was that of successful industry. He was one of the first who were active in the cattle trade, afterwards carried to such extent between the Highlands of Scotland and the leading counties in England, and by his droving transactions acquired a considerable sum of money. He was a man of middle stature, extremely active, quick, keen, and fiery in his temper, stubbornly honest, and so distinguished for his skill in country matters, that he was the general referee in all points of dispute which occurred in the neighbourhood. His birth being admitted as *gentle*, gave him access to the best society in the county, and his dexterity in country sports, particularly hunting, made him an acceptable companion in the field as well as at the table.[1]

Robert Scott of Sandy-Knowe, married, in 1728, Barbara Haliburton, daughter of Thomas Haliburton of Newmains, an ancient and respectable family in Berwickshire. Among other patrimonial possessions, they enjoyed the part of Dryburgh, now the property of the Earl of Buchan, comprehending the ruins of the Abbey. My granduncle, Robert Haliburton, having no male heirs, this estate, as well as the representation of the family, would have devolved upon my father, and indeed Old Newmains had settled it upon him; but this was prevented by the misfortunes of my granduncle, a weak silly man, who engaged in trade, for which he had neither stock nor talents, and became bankrupt. The ancient patrimony was sold for a trifle (about £3000), and my father, who might have pur-

[1] The present Lord Haddington, and other gentlemen conversant with the south country, remember my grandfather well. He was a fine alert figure, and wore a jockey cap over his grey hair.—1826.

chased it with ease, was dissuaded by my grandfather, who at that time believed a more advantageous purchase might have been made of some lands which Raeburn thought of selling. And thus we have nothing left of Dryburgh, although my father's maternal inheritance, but the right of stretching our bones where mine may perhaps be laid ere any eye but my own glances over these pages.

Walter Scott, my father, was born in 1729, and educated to the profession of a Writer to the Signet. He was the eldest of a large family, several of whom I shall have occasion to mention with a tribute of sincere gratitude. My father was a singular instance of a man rising to eminence in a profession for which nature had in some degree unfitted him. He had indeed a turn for labour, and a pleasure in analyzing the abstruse feudal doctrines connected with conveyancing, which would probably have rendered him unrivalled in the line of a special pleader, had there been such a profession in Scotland; but in the actual business of the profession which he embraced, in that sharp and intuitive perception which is necessary in driving bargains for himself and others, in availing himself of the wants, necessities, caprices, and follies of some, and guarding against the knavery and malice of others, Uncle Toby himself could not have conducted himself with more simplicity than my father. Most attorneys have been suspected, more or less justly, of making their own fortune at the expense of their clients—my father's fate was to vindicate his calling from the stain in one instance, for in many cases his clients contrived to ease him of considerable sums. Many worshipful and be-knighted names occur to my memory, who did him the honour to run in his debt to the amount of thousands, and to pay him with a lawsuit, or a commission of bankruptcy, as the case happened. But they are gone to a different accounting, and it would be ungenerous to visit their disgrace upon their descendants. My father was wont also to give openings, to those who were pleased to take them, to

pick a quarrel with him. He had a zeal for his clients which was almost ludicrous: far from coldly discharging the duties of his employment towards them, he thought for them, felt for their honour as for his own, and rather risked disobliging them than neglecting anything to which he conceived their duty bound them. If there was an old mother or aunt to be maintained, he was, I am afraid, too apt to administer to their necessities from what the young heir had destined exclusively to his pleasures. This ready discharge of obligations which the Civilians tell us are only natural and not legal, did not, I fear, recommend him to his employers. Yet his practice was, at one period of his life, very extensive. He understood his business theoretically, and was early introduced to it by a partnership with George Chalmers, Writer to the Signet, under whom he had served his apprenticeship.

His person and face were uncommonly handsome, with an expression of sweetness of temper, which was not fallacious; his manners were rather formal, but full of genuine kindness, especially when exercising the duties of hospitality. His general habits were not only temperate, but severely abstemious; but upon a festival occasion, there were few whom a moderate glass of wine exhilarated to such a lively degree. His religion, in which he was devoutly sincere, was Calvinism of the strictest kind, and his favourite study related to church history. I suspect the good old man was often engaged with Knox and Spottiswoode's folios, when, immured in his solitary room, he was supposed to be immersed in professional researches. In his political principles he was a steady friend to freedom, with a bias, however, to the monarchical part of our constitution, which he considered as peculiarly exposed to danger during the later years of his life. He had much of ancient Scottish prejudice respecting the forms of marriages, funerals, christenings, and so forth, and was always vexed at any neglect of etiquette upon such occasions. As his education had not been upon an enlarged

plan, it could not be expected that he should be an enlightened scholar, but he had not passed through a busy life without observation; and his remarks upon times and manners often exhibited strong traits of practical though untaught philosophy. Let me conclude this sketch, which I am unconscious of having overcharged, with a few lines written by the late Mrs Cockburn[1] upon the subject. They made one among a set of poetical characters which were given as toasts among a few friends, and we must hold them to contain a striking likeness, since the original was recognised so soon as they were read aloud:—

"To a thing that 's uncommon—a youth of discretion,
Who, though vastly handsome, despises flirtation:
To the friend in affliction, the heart of affection,
Who may hear the last trump without dread of detection."

In April 1758, my father married Anne Rutherford, eldest daughter of Dr John Rutherford, professor of medicine in the University of Edinburgh. He was one of those pupils of Boerhaave, to whom the school of medicine in our northern metropolis owes its rise, and a man distinguished for professional talent, for lively wit, and for literary acquirements. Dr Rutherford was twice married. His first wife, of whom my mother is the sole surviving child, was a daughter of Sir John Swinton of Swinton, a family which produced many distinguished warriors during the middle ages, and which, for antiquity and honourable alliances, may rank with any in Britain. My grandfather's second wife was Miss Mackay, by whom he had a second family, of whom are now (1808) alive, Dr Daniel Rutherford, professor of botany in the University of Edinburgh, and Misses Janet and Christian Rutherford, amiable and accomplished women.

[1] Mrs Cockburn (born Miss Rutherford of Fairnalie) was the authoress of the beautiful song—

"I have seen the smiling
Of fortune beguiling."

My father and mother had a very numerous family, no fewer, I believe, than twelve children, of whom many were highly promising, though only five survived very early youth. My eldest brother Robert was bred in the King's service, and was in most of Rodney's battles. His temper was bold and haughty, and to me was often checkered with what I felt to be capricious tyranny. In other respects I loved him much, for he had a strong turn for literature, read poetry with taste and judgment, and composed verses himself, which had gained him great applause among his messmates. Witness the following elegy upon the supposed loss of the vessel, composed the night before Rodney's celebrated battle of April the 12th, 1782. It alludes to the various amusements of his mess:—

> "No more the geese shall cackle on the poop,
> No more the bagpipe through the orlop sound,
> No more the midshipmen, a jovial group,
> Shall toast the girls, and push the bottle round.
> In death's dark road at anchor fast they stay,
> Till Heaven's loud signal shall in thunder roar;
> Then starting up, all hands shall quick obey,
> Sheet home the topsail, and with speed unmoor."

Robert sung agreeably—(a virtue which was never seen in me)—understood the mechanical arts, and when in good humour, could regale us with many a tale of bold adventure and narrow escapes. When in bad humour, however, he gave us a practical taste of what was then man-of-war's discipline, and kicked and cuffed without mercy. I have often thought how he might have distinguished himself had he continued in the navy until the present times, so glorious for nautical exploit. But the peace of 1783 cut off all hopes of promotion for those who had not great interest; and some disgust which his proud spirit had taken at harsh usage from a superior officer, combined to throw poor Robert into the East-India Company's service, for which

his habits were ill adapted. He made two voyages to the East, and died a victim to the climate.

John Scott, my second brother, is about three years older than me. He addicted himself to the military service, and is now brevet-major in the 73d regiment.[1]

I had an only sister, Anne Scott, who seemed to be from her cradle the butt for mischance to shoot arrows at. Her childhood was marked by perilous escapes from the most extraordinary accidents. Among others, I remember an iron-railed door leading into the area in the centre of George's Square being closed by the wind, while her fingers were betwixt the hasp and staple. Her hand was thus locked in, and must have been smashed to pieces, had not the bones of her fingers been remarkably slight and thin. As it was, the hand was cruelly mangled. On another occasion, she was nearly drowned in a pond, or old quarry-hole, in what was then called Brown's Park, on the south side of the square. But the most unfortunate accident, and which, though it happened while she was only six years old, proved the remote cause of her death, was her cap accidentally taking fire. The child was alone in the room, and before assistance could be obtained, her head was dreadfully scorched. After a lingering and dangerous illness, she recovered—but never to enjoy perfect health. The slightest cold occasioned swellings in her face, and other indications of a delicate constitution. At length [in 1801], poor Anne was taken ill, and died after a very short interval. Her temper, like that of her brothers, was peculiar, and in her, perhaps, it shewed more odd, from the habits of indulgence which her nervous illness had formed. But she was at

[1] He was this year made major of the second battalion by the kind intercession of Mr Canning at the War-Office—1809. He retired from the army, and kept house with my mother. His health was totally broken, and he died, yet a young man, on 8th May 1816.—1826.

heart an affectionate and kind girl, neither void of talent nor of feeling, though living in an ideal world which she had framed to herself by the force of imagination. Anne was my junior by about a year.

A year lower in the list was my brother Thomas Scott, who is still alive.[1]

Last, and most unfortunate of our family, was my youngest brother, Daniel. With the same aversion to labour, or rather, I should say, the same determined indolence that marked us all, he had neither the vivacity of intellect which supplies the want of diligence, nor the pride which renders the most detested labour better than dependence or contempt. His career was as unfortunate as might be augured from such an unhappy combination; and, after various unsuccessful attempts to establish himself in life, he died on his return from the West Indies, in July 1806.

Having premised so much of my family, I return to my own story. I was born, as I believe, on the 15th August 1771, in a house belonging to my father, at the head of the College Wynd. It was pulled down, with others, to make room for the northern front of the new College. I was an uncommonly healthy child, but had nearly died in consequence of my first nurse being ill of a consumption, a circumstance which she chose to conceal, though to do so was murder to both herself and me. She went privately to consult Dr Black, the celebrated professor of chemistry, who

[1] Poor Tom, a man of infinite humour and excellent parts, pursued for some time my father's profession; but he was unfortunate, from engaging in speculations respecting farms and matters out of the line of his proper business. He afterwards became paymaster of the 70th regiment, and died in Canada. Tom married Elizabeth, a daughter of the family of M'Culloch of Ardwell, an ancient Galwegian stock, by whom he left a son, Walter Scott, now second lieutenant of Engineers in the East India Company's service, Bombay—and three daughters, Jessie, married to Lieutenant-Colonel Huxley; 2. Anne; 3. Eliza—the two last still unmarried—1826.

put my father on his guard. The woman was dismissed, and I was consigned to a healthy peasant, who is still alive to boast of her *laddie* being what she calls *a grand gentleman.* I shewed every sign of health and strength until I was about eighteen months old. One night, I have been often told, I shewed great reluctance to be caught and put to bed; and after being chased about the room, was apprehended and consigned to my dormitory with some difficulty. It was the last time I was to shew such personal agility. In the morning, I was discovered to be affected with the fever which often accompanies the cutting of large teeth. It held me three days. On the fourth, when they went to bathe me as usual, they discovered that I had lost the power of my right leg. My grandfather, an excellent anatomist as well as physician, the late worthy Alexander Wood, and many others of the most respectable of the faculty, were consulted. There appeared to be no dislocation or sprain; blisters and other topical remedies were applied in vain. When the efforts of regular physicians had been exhausted, without the slightest success, my anxious parents, during the course of many years, eagerly grasped at every prospect of cure which was held out by the promise of empirics, or of ancient ladies or gentlemen who conceived themselves entitled to recommend various remedies, some of which were of a nature sufficiently singular. But the advice of my grandfather, Dr Rutherford, that I should be sent to reside in the country, to give the chance of natural exertion, excited by free air and liberty, was first resorted to; and before I have the recollection of the slightest event, I was, agreeably to this friendly counsel, an inmate in the farm-house of Sandy-Knowe.

An odd incident is worth recording. It seems my mother had sent a maid to take charge of me, that I might be no inconvenience in the family. But the damsel sent on that important mission had left her heart behind her, in the keeping of some wild fellow, it is likely, who had

done and said more to her than he was like to make good. She became extremely desirous to return to Edinburgh, and as my mother made a point of her remaining where she was, she contracted a sort of hatred at poor me, as the cause of her being detained at Sandy-Knowe. This rose, I suppose, to a sort of delirious affection, for she confessed to old Alison Wilson, the housekeeper, that she had carried me up to the Craigs, meaning, under a strong temptation of the Devil, to cut my throat with her scissors, and bury me in the moss. Alison instantly took possession of my person, and took care that her confidant should not be subject to any farther temptation, so far as I was concerned. She was dismissed, of course, and I have heard became afterwards a lunatic.[1]

[1] [The epistle prefixed to the 6th canto of Marmion, contains a charming picture of the infant poet's feelings amidst the scenery and associations of Smailholm Tower and Sandy-Knowe.

> "It was a barren scene and wild,
> Where naked cliffs were rudely piled," &c. &c.

There are still (1836) living in that neighbourhood two old women, who were in the domestic service of Sandy-Knowe, when the lame child was brought thither in the third year of his age. One of them, Tibby Hunter, remembers his coming well; and that "he was a sweet-tempered bairn, a darling with all about the house." The young ewe-milkers delighted, she says, to carry him about on their backs among the crags; and he was "very gleg (quick) at the uptake, and soon kenned every sheep and lamb by head-mark as well as any of them." His great pleasure, however, was in the society of the "aged hind" recorded in the epistle to Erskine. "Auld Sandy Ormiston," called, from the most dignified part of his function, "the Cow-bailie," who had the chief superintendence of the flocks that browsed upon "the velvet tufts of loveliest green." If the child saw him in the morning, he could not be satisfied unless the old man would set him astride on his shoulder, and take him to keep him company as he lay watching his charge.

> "Here was poetic impulse given
> By the green hill and clear blue heaven."

The Cow-bailie blew a particular note on his whistle, which signi-

It is here at Sandy-Knowe, in the residence of my paternal grandfather, already mentioned, that I have the first consciousness of existence; and I recollect distinctly that my situation and appearance were a little whimsical. Among the odd remedies recurred to to aid my lameness, some one had recommended, that so often as a sheep was killed for the use of the family, I should be stripped, and swathed up in the skin, warm as it was flayed from the carcase of the animal. In this Tartar-like habiliment I well remember lying upon the floor of the little parlour in the farm-house, while my grandfather, a venerable old man with white hair, used every excitement to make me try to crawl. I also distinctly remember the late Sir George MacDougal of Mackerstoun, father of the present Sir Henry Hay MacDougal, joining in this kindly attempt. He was, God knows how,[1] a relation of ours, and I still

fied to the maid servants in the house below when the little boy wished to be carried home again. He told his friend, Mr Skene of Rubislaw, when spending a summer day in his old age among these well-remembered crags, that he delighted to roll about on the grass all day long in the midst of the flock, and that "the sort of fellowship he thus formed with the sheep and lambs had impressed his mind with a degree of affectionate feeling towards them which had lasted throughout life." There is a story of his having been forgotten one day among the knolls when a thunder storm came on; and his aunt, suddenly recollecting his situation, and running out to bring him home, is said to have found him lying on his back, clapping his hands at the lightning, and crying out, "Bonny! bonny!" at every flash.—Ed.]

[1] He was a second-cousin of my grandfather's. Isobel MacDougal, wife of Walter, the first Laird of Raeburn, and mother of Walter Scott, called Beardie, was grand aunt, I take it, to the late Sir George MacDougal. There was always great friendship between us and the Makerstoun family. It singularly happened, that at the burial of the late Sir Henry MacDougal, my cousin William Scott, younger of Raeburn, and I myself, were the nearest blood-relations present, although our connexion was of so old a date, and ranked as pall-bearers accordingly.—1826.

recollect him in his old-fashioned military habit (he had been colonel of the Greys), with a small cocked hat, deeply laced, an embroidered scarlet waistcoat, and a light-coloured coat, with milk-white locks tied in a military fashion, kneeling on the ground before me, and dragging his watch along the carpet to induce me to follow it. The benevolent old soldier and the infant wrapped in his sheepskin would have afforded an odd group to uninterested spectators. This must have happened about my third year, for Sir George MacDougal and my grandfather both died shortly after that period.

My grandmother continued for some years to take charge of the farm, assisted by my father's second brother, Mr Thomas Scott, who resided at Crailing, as factor or land-steward for Mr Scott of Danesfield, then proprietor of that estate.[1] This was during the heat of the American war, and I remember being as anxious on my uncle's weekly visits (for we heard news at no other time) to hear of the defeat of Washington, as if I had had some deep and personal cause of antipathy to him. I know not how this was combined with a very strong prejudice in favour of the Stuart family, which I had originally imbibed from the songs and tales of the Jacobites. This latter political propensity was deeply confirmed by the stories told in my hearing of the cruelties exercised in the executions at Carlisle, and in the Highlands, after the battle of Culloden. One or two of our own distant relations had fallen on that occasion, and I remember of detesting the name of Cumberland with more than infant hatred. Mr Curle, farmer

[1] My uncle afterwards resided at Elliston, and then took from Mr Cornelius Elliot the estate of Woollee. Finally he retired to Monklaw, in the neighbourhood of Jedburgh, where he died, 1823, at the advanced age of ninety years, and in full possession of his faculties. It was a fine thing to hear him talk over the change of the country which he had witnessed.—1826.

at Yetbyre, husband of one of my aunts, had been present at their execution; and it was probably from him that I first heard these tragic tales which made so great an impression on me. The local information, which I conceive had some share in forming my future taste and pursuits, I derived from the old songs and tales which then formed the amusement of a retired country family. My grandmother, in whose youth the old Border depredations were matter of recent tradition, used to tell me many a tale of Watt of Harden, Wight Willie of Aikwood, Jamie Telfer of the fair Dodhead, and other heroes—merrymen all of the persuasion and calling of Robin Hood and Little John. A more recent hero, but not of less note, was the celebrated *Diel of Littledean*, whom she well remembered, as he had married her mother's sister. Of this extraordinary person I learned many a story, grave and gay, comic and warlike. Two or three old books which lay in the window-seat were explored for my amusement in the tedious winter days. Automathes, and Ramsay's Tea-table Miscellany, were my favourites, although at a later period an odd volume of Josephus's Wars of the Jews divided my partiality.

My kind and affectionate aunt, Miss Janet Scott, whose memory will ever be dear to me, used to read these works to me with admirable patience, until I could repeat long passages by heart. The ballad of Hardyknute I was early master of, to the great annoyance of almost our only visiter, the worthy clergyman of the parish, Dr Duncan, who had not patience to have a sober chat interrupted by my shouting forth this ditty. Methinks I now see his tall thin emaciated figure, his legs cased in clasped gambadoes, and his face of a length that would have rivalled the Knight of La Mancha's, and hear him exclaiming, "One may as well speak in the mouth of a cannon as where that child is." With this little acidity, which was natural to him, he was a most excellent and benevolent man, a gentleman in

every feeling, and altogether different from those of his order who cringe at the tables of the gentry, or domineer and riot at those of the yeomanry. In his youth he had been chaplain in the family of Lord Marchmont—had seen Pope—and could talk familiarly of many characters who had survived the Augustan age of Queen Anne. Though valetudinary, he lived to be nearly ninety, and to welcome to Scotland his son, Colonel William Duncan, who, with the highest character for military and civil merit, had made a considerable fortune in India. In [1795], a few days before his death, I paid him a visit, to inquire after his health. I found him emaciated to the last degree, wrapped in a tartan night-gown, and employed with all the activity of health and youth in correcting a history of the Revolution, which he intended should be given to the public when he was no more. He read me several passages with a voice naturally strong, and which the feelings of an author then raised above the depression of age and declining health. I begged him to spare this fatigue, which could not but injure his health. His answer was remarkable. "I know," he said, "that I cannot survive a fortnight—and what signifies an exertion that can at worst only accelerate my death a few days?" I marvelled at the composure of this reply, for his appearance sufficiently vouched the truth of his prophecy, and rode home to my uncle's (then my abode), musing what there could be in the spirit of authorship that could inspire its votaries with the courage of martyrs. He died within less than the period he assigned —with which event I close my digression.

I was in my fourth year when my father was advised that the Bath waters might be of some advantage to my lameness. My affectionate aunt, although such a journey promised to a person of her retired habits any thing but pleasure or amusement, undertook as readily to accompany me to the wells of Bladud, as if she had expected all the delight that ever the prospect of a watering-place held out

to its most impatient visitants. My health was by this time a good deal confirmed by the country air, and the influence of that imperceptible and unfatiguing exercise to which the good sense of my grandfather had subjected me; for when the day was fine, I was usually carried out and laid down beside the old shepherd, among the crags or rocks round which he fed his sheep. The impatience of a child soon inclined me to struggle with my infirmity, and I began by degrees to stand, to walk, and to run. Although the limb affected was much shrunk and contracted, my general health, which was of more importance, was much strengthened by being frequently in the open air; and, in a word, I who in a city had probably been condemned to hopeless and helpless decrepitude, was now a healthy, high-spirited, and, my lameness apart, a sturdy child—*non sine diis animosus infans.*

We went to London by sea, and it may gratify the curiosity of minute biographers to learn that our voyage was performed in the Duchess of Buccleuch, Captain Beatson, master. At London we made a short stay, and saw some of the common shows exhibited to strangers. When, twenty-five years afterwards, I visited the Tower of London and Westminster Abbey, I was astonished to find how accurate my recollections of these celebrated places of visitation proved to be, and I have ever since trusted more implicitly to my juvenile reminiscences. At Bath, where I lived about a year, I went through all the usual discipline of the pump-room and baths, but I believe without the least advantage to my lameness. During my residence at Bath, I acquired the rudiments of reading at a day-school, kept by an old dame near our lodgings, and I had never a more regular teacher, although I think I did not attend her a quarter of a year. An occasional lesson from my aunt supplied the rest. Afterwards, when grown a big boy, I had a few lessons from Mr Stalker of Edinburgh, and finally from the Rev. Mr Cleeve. But I never

acquired a just pronunciation, nor could I read with much propriety.

In other respects my residence at Bath is marked by very pleasing recollections. The venerable John Home, author of Douglas, was then at the watering-place, and paid much attention to my aunt and to me. His wife, who has survived him, was then an invalid, and used to take the air in her carriage on the Downs, when I was often invited to accompany her. But the most delightful recollections of Bath are dated after the arrival of my uncle, Captain Robert Scott, who introduced me to all the little amusements which suited my age, and above all, to the theatre. The play was As You Like It; and the witchery of the whole scene is alive in my mind at this moment. I made, I believe, noise more than enough, and remember being so much scandalized at the quarrel between Orlando and his brother in the first scene, that I screamed out, "A'n't they brothers?"[1] A few weeks' residence at home convinced me, who had till then been an only child in the house of my grandfather, that a quarrel between brothers was a very natural event.

The other circumstances I recollect of my residence in Bath are but trifling, yet I never recall them without a feeling of pleasure. The beauties of the parade (which of them I know not), with the river of Avon winding around it, and the lowing of the cattle from the opposite hills, are warm in my recollection, and are only rivalled by the splendours of a toy-shop somewhere near the Orange Grove. I had acquired, I know not by what means, a kind of superstitious terror for statuary of all kinds. No ancient Iconoclast or modern Calvinist could have looked on the outside of the Abbey church (if I mistake not the principal church at Bath is so called) with more horror than the

[1] [See Scott's Review of the Life of John Kemble, Miscell. Prose, vol. xx. p. 154.—Ed.]

image of Jacob's Ladder, with all its angels, presented to my infant eye. My uncle effectually combated my terrors, and formally introduced me to a statue of Neptune, which perhaps still keeps guard at the side of the Avon, where a pleasure boat crosses to Spring Gardens.

After being a year at Bath, I returned first to Edinburgh, and afterwards for a season to Sandy-Knowe ;—and thus the time whiled away till about my eighth year, when it was thought sea-bathing might be of service to my lameness.

For this purpose, still under my aunt's protection, I remained some weeks at Prestonpans ; a circumstance not worth mentioning, excepting to record my juvenile intimacy with an old military veteran, Dalgetty by name, who had pitched his tent in that little village, after all his campaigns, subsisting upon an ensign's half-pay, though called by courtesy a Captain. As this old gentleman, who had been in all the German wars, found very few to listen to his tales of military feats, he formed a sort of alliance with me, and I used invariably to attend him for the pleasure of hearing those communications. Sometimes our conversation turned on the American war, which was then raging. It was about the time of Burgoyne's unfortunate expedition, to which my Captain and I augured different conclusions. Somebody had shewed me a map of North America, and, struck with the rugged appearance of the country, and the quantity of lakes, I expressed some doubts on the subject of the General's arriving safely at the end of his journey, which were very indignantly refuted by the Captain. The news of the Saratoga disaster, while it gave me a little triumph, rather shook my intimacy with the veteran.[1]

[1] Besides this veteran, I found another ally at Prestonpans, in the person of George Constable, an old friend of my father's, educated to the law, but retired upon his independent property, and

From Prestonpans I was transported back to my father's house in George's Square, which continued to be my most established place of residence, until my marriage in 1797. I felt the change from being a single indulged brat, to becoming a member of a large family, very severely; for under the gentle government of my kind grandmother, who was meekness itself, and of my aunt, who, though of an higher temper, was exceedingly attached to me, I had acquired a degree of licence which could not be permitted in a large family. I had sense enough, however, to bend my temper to my new circumstances; but such was the agony

generally residing near Dundee. He had many of those peculiarities of temper which long afterwards I tried to develope in the character of Jonathan Oldbuck. It is very odd, that though I am unconscious of anything in which I strictly copied the *manners* of my old friend, the resemblance was nevertheless detected by George Chalmers, Esq., solicitor, London, an old friend, both of my father and Mr Constable, and who affirmed to my late friend, Lord Kinedder, that I must needs be the author of The Antiquary, since he recognised the portrait of George Constable. But my friend George was not so decided an enemy to womankind as his representative Monkbarns. On the contrary, I rather suspect that he had a *tendresse* for my aunt Jenny, who even then was a most beautiful woman, though somewhat advanced in life. To the close of her life, she had the finest eyes and teeth I ever saw, and though she could be sufficiently sharp when she had a mind, her general behaviour was genteel and ladylike. However this might be, I derived a great deal of curious information from George Constable, both at this early period, and afterwards. He was constantly philandering about my aunt, and of course very kind to me. He was the first person who told me about Falstaff and Hotspur, and other characters in Shakspeare. What idea I annexed to them I know not, but I must have annexed some, for I remember quite well being interested on the subject. Indeed, I rather suspect that children derive impulses of a powerful and important kind in hearing things which they cannot entirely comprehend; and therefore, that to write *down* to children's understanding is a mistake: set them on the scent, and let them puzzle it out. To

which I internally experienced, that I have guarded against nothing more in the education of my own family, than against their acquiring habits of self-willed caprice and domination. I found much consolation during this period of mortification, in the partiality of my mother. She joined to a light and happy temper of mind a strong turn to study poetry and works of imagination. She was sincerely devout, but her religion was, as became her sex, of a cast less austere than my father's. Still, the discipline of the Prysbyterian Sabbath was severely strict, and I think injudiciously so. Although Bunyan's Pilgrim, Ges-

return to George Constable: I knew him well at a much later period. He used always to dine at my father's house of a Sunday, and was authorized to turn the conversation out of the austere and Calvinistic tone, which it usually maintained on that day, upon subjects of history or auld langsyne. He remembered the forty-five, and told many excellent stories, all with a strong dash of a peculiar caustic humour.

George's sworn ally as a brother antiquary was John Davidson, then Keeper of the Signet; and I remember his flattering and compelling me to go to dine there. A writer's apprentice with the Keeper of the Signet, whose least officer kept us in order!—It was an awful event. Thither, however, I went with some secret expectation of a scantling of good claret. Mr D. had a son whose taste inclined him to the army, to which his father, who had designed him for the bar, gave a most unwilling consent. He was at this time a young officer, and he and I, leaving the two seniors to proceed in their chat as they pleased, never once opened our mouths either to them or each other. The Pragmatic Sanction happened unfortunately to become the theme of their conversation, when Constable said in jest, "Now, John, I'll wad you a plack that neither of these two lads ever heard of the Pragmatic Sanction."—"Not heard of the Pragmatic Sanction!" said John Davidson; "I would like to see that;" and with a voice of thunder, he asked his son the fatal question. As young D. modestly allowed he knew nothing about it, his father drove him from the table in a rage, and I absconded during the confusion; nor could Constable ever bring me back again to his friend Davidson's.—1826.

ner's Death of Abel, Rowe's Letters, and one or two other books, which, for that reason, I still have a favour for, were admitted to relieve the gloom of one dull sermon succeeding to another—there was far too much tedium annexed to the duties of the day; and in the end it did none of us any good.

My week-day tasks were more agreeable. My lameness and my solitary habits had made me a tolerable reader, and my hours of leisure were usually spent in reading aloud to my mother Pope's translation of Homer, which, excepting a few traditionary ballads, and the songs in Allan Ramsay's Evergreen, was the first poetry which I perused. My mother had good natural taste and great feeling: she used to make me pause upon those passages which expressed generous and worthy sentiments, and if she could not divert me from those which were descriptive of battle and tumult, she contrived at least to divide my attention between them. My own enthusiasm, however, was chiefly awakened by the wonderful and the terrible—the common taste of children, but in which I have remained a child even unto this day. I got by heart, not as a task, but almost without intending it, the passages with which I was most pleased, and used to recite them aloud, both when alone and to others—more willingly, however, in my hours of solitude, for I had observed some auditors smile, and I dreaded ridicule at that time of life more than I have ever done since.

In [1778] I was sent to the second class of the Grammar School, or High School of Edinburgh, then taught by Mr Luke Fraser, a good Latin scholar and a very worthy man. Though I had received, with my brothers, in private, lessons of Latin from Mr James French, now a minister of the Kirk of Scotland, I was nevertheless rather behind the class in which I was placed both in years and in progress. This was a real disadvantage, and one to which a boy of lively temper and talents ought to be as

little exposed as one who might be less expected to make up his lee-way, as it is called. The situation has the unfortunate effect of reconciling a boy of the former character (which in a posthumous work I may claim for my own) to holding a subordinate station among his class-fellows—to which he would otherwise affix disgrace. There is also, from the constitution of the High School, a certain danger not sufficiently attended to. The boys take precedence in their *places*, as they are called, according to their merit, and it requires a long while, in general, before even a clever boy, if he falls behind the class, or is put into one for which he is not quite ready, can force his way to the situation which his abilities really entitle him to hold. But, in the meanwhile, he is necessarily led to be the associate and companion of those inferior spirits with whom he is placed; for the system of precedence, though it does not limit the general intercourse among the boys, has nevertheless the effect of throwing them into clubs and coteries, according to the vicinity of the seats they hold. A boy of good talents, therefore, placed even for a time among his inferiors, especially if they be also his elders, learns to participate in their pursuits and objects of ambition, which are usually very distinct from the acquisition of learning; and it will be well if he does not also imitate them in that indifference which is contented with bustling over a lesson so as to avoid punishment, without affecting superiority or aiming at reward. It was probably owing to this circumstance, that, although at a more advanced period of life I have enjoyed considerable facility in acquiring languages, I did not make any great figure at the High School—or, at least, any exertions which I made were desultory and little to be depended on.[1]

Our class contained some very excellent scholars. The

[1] [The story of *Green-breeks*, and other passages in the General Preface to the Waverley Novels, afford some curious glimpses of High School life in Scott's days.—Ed.]

first *Dux* was James Buchan, who retained his honoured place, almost without a day's interval, all the while we were at the High School. He was afterwards at the head of the medical staff in Egypt, and in exposing himself to the plague infection, by attending the hospitals there, displayed the same well-regulated and gentle, yet determined perseverance, which placed him most worthily at the head of his school-fellows, while many lads of livelier parts and dispositions held an inferior station. The next best scholars (*sed longo intervallo*) were my friend David Douglas, the heir and *élève* of the celebrated Adam Smith, and James Hope, now a Writer to the Signet, both since well known and distinguished in their departments of the law. As for myself, I glanced like a meteor from one end of the class to the other, and commonly disgusted my kind master as much by negligence and frivolity, as I occasionally pleased him by flashes of intellect and talent. Among my companions, my good-nature and a flow of ready imagination rendered me very popular. Boys are uncommonly just in their feelings, and at least equally generous. My lameness, and the efforts which I made to supply that disadvantage, by making up in address what I wanted in activity, engaged the latter principle in my favour; and in the winter play hours, when hard exercise was impossible, my tales used to assemble an admiring audience round Lucky Brown's fire-side, and happy was he that could sit next to the inexhaustible narrator. I was also, though often negligent of my own task, always ready to assist my friends; and hence I had a little party of staunch partisans and adherents, stout of hand and heart, though somewhat dull of head—the very tools for raising a hero to eminence. So, on the whole, I made a brighter figure in the *yards* than in the *class*.[1]

[1] I read not long since, in that authentic record called the *Percy Anecdotes*, that I had been educated at Musselburgh school, where

My father did not trust our education solely to our High School lessons. We had a tutor at home [Mr James Mitchell], a young man of an excellent disposition, and a laborious student. He was bred to the Kirk, but unfortunately took such a very strong turn to fanaticism, that he afterwards resigned an excellent living in a seaport town, merely because he could not persuade the mariners of the guilt of setting sail of a Sabbath,—in which, by the by, he was less likely to be successful, as, *cœteris paribus*, sailors, from an opinion that it is a fortunate omen, always choose to weigh anchor on that day. The calibre of this young man's understanding may be judged of by this anecdote; but in other respects, he was a faithful and active instructor; and from him chiefly I learned writing and arithmetic. I repeated to him my French lessons, and studied with him my themes in the classics, but not classically. I also acquired, by disputing with him (for this he readily permitted), some knowledge of school-divinity and church-history, and a great acquaintance in particular with the old books describing the early history of the Church of Scotland, the wars and sufferings of the Covenanters, and so forth. I, with a head on fire for chivalry, was a Cavalier; my friend was a Roundhead: I was a Tory, and he was a Whig. I hated Presbyterians, and admired Montrose with his victorious Highlanders; he liked the Presbyterian Ulysses, the dark and politic Argyle: so that we never wanted subjects of dispute; but our disputes were always amicable. In all these tenets there was no real conviction on my part,

I had been distinguished as an absolute dunce; only Dr Blair, seeing farther into the mill-stone, had pronounced there was fire in it. I never was at Musselburgh school in my life, and though I have met Dr Blair at my father's and elsewhere, I never had the good fortune to attract his notice, to my knowledge. Lastly, I was never a dunce, nor thought to be so, but an incorrigibly idle imp, who was always longing to do something else than what was enjoined him.—1826

arising out of acquaintance with the views or principles of either party; nor had my antagonist address enough to turn the debate on such topics. I took up my politics at that period, as King Charles II. did his religion, from an idea that the Cavalier creed was the more gentlemanlike persuasion of the two.

After having been three years under Mr Fraser, our class was, in the usual routine of the school, turned over to Dr Adam, the Rector. It was from this respectable man that I first learned the value of the knowledge I had hitherto considered only as a burdensome task. It was the fashion to remain two years at his class, where we read Cæsar, and Livy, and Sallust, in prose; Virgil, Horace, and Terence, in verse. I had by this time mastered, in some degree, the difficulties of the language, and began to be sensible of its beauties. This was really gathering grapes from thistles; nor shall I soon forget the swelling of my little pride when the Rector pronounced, that though many of my school-fellows understood the Latin better, *Gualterus Scott* was behind few in following and enjoying the author's meaning. Thus encouraged, I distinguished myself by some attempts at poetical versions from Horace and Virgil.[1] Dr Adam used to invite his scholars to such essays, but never made them tasks. I gained some distinction upon these occasions, and the Rector in future took

[1] [One of these little pieces, written in a weak boyish scrawl, within pencilled marks still visible, had been carefully preserved by his mother; it was folded up in a cover inscribed by the old lady—"*My Walter's first lines*, 1782."

"In awful ruins Ætna thunders nigh,
And sends in pitchy whirlwinds to the sky
Black clouds of smoke, which, still as they aspire,
From their dark sides there bursts the glowing fire;
At other times huge balls of fire are toss'd,
That lick the stars, and in the smoke are lost:
Sometimes the mount, with vast convulsions torn,
Emits huge rocks, which instantly are borne
With loud explosions to the starry skies,
The stones made liquid as the huge mass flies,
Then back again with greater weight recoils,
While Ætna thundering from the bottom boils."—Ed.]

much notice of me; and his judicious mixture of censure and praise went far to counterbalance my habits of indolence and inattention. I saw I was expected to do well, and I was piqued in honour to vindicate my master's favourable opinion. I climbed, therefore, to the first form; and, though I never made a first-rate Latinist, my school-fellows, and what was of more consequence, I myself, considered that I had a character for learning to maintain. Dr Adam, to whom I owed so much, never failed to remind me of my obligations when I had made some figure in the literary world. He was, indeed, deeply imbued with that fortunate vanity which alone could induce a man who has arms to pare and burn a muir, to submit to the yet more toilsome task of cultivating youth. As Catholics confide in the imputed righteousness of their saints, so did the good old Doctor plume himself upon the success of his scholars in life, all of which he never failed (and often justly) to claim as the creation, or at least the fruits, of his early instructions. He remembered the fate of every boy at his school during the fifty years he had superintended it, and always traced their success or misfortunes entirely to their attention or negligence when under his care. His "noisy mansion," which to others would have been a melancholy bedlam, was the pride of his heart; and the only fatigues he felt, amidst din and tumult, and the necessity of reading themes, hearing lessons, and maintaining some degree of order at the same time, were relieved by comparing himself to Cæsar, who could dictate to three secretaries at once;—so ready is vanity to lighten the labours of duty.

It is a pity that a man so learned, so admirably adapted for his station, so useful, so simple, so easily contented, should have had other subjects of mortification. But the magistrates of Edinburgh, not knowing the treasure they possessed in Dr Adam, encouraged a savage fellow, called Nicol, one of the undermasters, in insulting his person and

authority. This man was an excellent classical scholar, and an admirable convivial humourist (which latter quality recommended him to the friendship of Burns); but worthless, drunken, and inhumanly cruel to the boys under his charge. He carried his feud against the Rector within an inch of assassination, for he waylaid and knocked him down in the dark. The favour which this worthless rival obtained in the town-council led to other consequences, which for some time clouded poor Adam's happiness and fair fame. When the French Revolution broke out, and parties ran high in approving or condemning it, the Doctor incautiously joined the former. This was very natural, for as all his ideas of existing governments were derived from his experience of the town-council of Edinburgh, it must be admitted they scarce brooked comparison with the free states of Rome and Greece, from which he borrowed his opinions concerning republics. His want of caution in speaking on the political topics of the day lost him the respect of the boys, most of whom were accustomed to hear very different opinions on those matters in the bosom of their families. This, however (which was long after my time), passed away with other heats of the period, and the Doctor continued his labours till about a year since, when he was struck with palsy while teaching his class. He survived a few days, but becoming delirious before his dissolution, conceived he was still in school, and after some expressions of applause or censure, he said, "But it grows dark—the boys may dismiss,"—and instantly expired.

From Dr Adam's class I should, according to the usual routine, have proceeded immediately to college. But, fortunately, I was not yet to lose, by a total dismission from constraint, the acquaintance with the Latin which I had acquired. My health had become rather delicate from rapid growth, and my father was easily persuaded to allow me to spend half-a-year at Kelso with my kind aunt, Miss

Janet Scott, whose inmate I again became. It was hardly worth mentioning that I had frequently visited her during our short vacations.

At this time she resided in a small house, situated very pleasantly in a large garden, to the eastward of the churchyard of Kelso, which extended down to the Tweed. It was then my father's property, from whom it was afterwards purchased by my uncle. My grandmother was now dead, and my aunt's only companion, besides an old maidservant, was my cousin, Miss Barbara Scott, now Mrs Meik. My time was here left entirely to my own disposal, excepting for about four hours in the day, when I was expected to attend the Grammar-school of the village. The teacher, at that time, was Mr Lancelot Whale, an excellent classical scholar, a humourist, and a worthy man. He had a supreme antipathy to the puns which his very uncommon name frequently gave rise to; insomuch, that he made his son spell the word *Wale*, which only occasioned the young man being nicknamed *the Prince of Wales* by the military mess to which he belonged. As for Whale, senior, the least allusion to Jonah, or the terming him an odd fish, or any similar quibble, was sure to put him beside himself. In point of knowledge and taste, he was far too good for the situation he held, which only required that he should give his scholars a rough foundation in the Latin language. My time with him, though short, was spent greatly to my advantage and his gratification. He was glad to escape to Persius and Tacitus from the eternal Rudiments and Cornelius Nepos; and as perusing these authors with one who began to understand them was to him a labour of love, I made considerable progress under his instructions. I suspect, indeed, that some of the time dedicated to me was withdrawn from the instruction of his more regular scholars; but I was as grateful as I could. I acted as usher, and heard the inferior classes, and I spouted the speech of Galgacus at the public examination, which did not make

the less impression on the audience that few of them probably understood one word of it.

In the mean while my acquaintance with English literature was gradually extending itself. In the intervals of my school hours I had always perused with avidity such books of history or poetry or voyages and travels as chance presented to me—not forgetting the usual, or rather ten times the usual, quantity of fairy tales, eastern stories, romances, &c. These studies were totally unregulated and undirected. My tutor thought it almost a sin to open a profane play or poem; and my mother, besides that she might be in some degree trammelled by the religious scruples which he suggested, had no longer the opportunity to hear me read poetry as formerly. I found, however, in her dressing-room (where I slept at one time) some odd volumes of Shakspeare, nor can I easily forget the rapture with which I sate up in my shirt reading them by the light of a fire in her apartment, until the bustle of the family rising from supper warned me it was time to creep back to my bed, where I was supposed to have been safely deposited since nine o'clock. Chance, however, threw in my way a poetical preceptor. This was no other than the excellent and benevolent Dr Blacklock, well known at that time as a literary character. I know not how I attracted his attention, and that of some of the young men who boarded in his family; but so it was that I became a frequent and favoured guest. The kind old man opened to me the stores of his library, and through his recommendation I became intimate with Ossian and Spenser. I was delighted with both, yet I think chiefly with the latter poet. The tawdry repetitions of the Ossianic phraseology disgusted me rather sooner than might have been expected from my age. But Spenser I could have read for ever. Too young to trouble myself about the allegory, I considered all the knights and ladies and dragons and giants in their outward and exoteric sense, and God only knows how delighted I

was to find myself in such society. As I had always a wonderful facility in retaining in my memory whatever verses pleased me, the quantity of Spenser's stanzas which I could repeat was really marvellous. But this memory of mine was a very fickle ally, and has through my whole life acted merely upon its own capricious motion, and might have enabled me to adopt old Beattie of Meikledale's answer, when complimented by a certain reverend divine on the strength of the same faculty:—"No, sir," answered the old Borderer, "I have no command of my memory. It only retains what hits my fancy, and probably, sir, if you were to preach to me for two hours, I would not be able when you finished to remember a word you had been saying." My memory was precisely of the same kind: it seldom failed to preserve most tenaciously a favourite passage of poetry, a play-house ditty, or, above all, a Border-raid ballad; but names, dates, and the other technicalities of history, escaped me in a most melancholy degree. The philosophy of history, a much more important subject, was also a sealed book at this period of my life; but I gradually assembled much of what was striking and picturesque in historical narrative; and when, in riper years, I attended more to the deduction of general principles, I was furnished with a powerful host of examples in illustration of them. I was, in short, like an ignorant gamester, who kept up a good hand until he knew how to play it.

I left the High School, therefore, with a great quantity of general information, ill arranged, indeed, and collected without system; yet deeply impressed upon my mind; readily assorted by my power of connexion and memory, and gilded, if I may be permitted to say so, by a vivid and active imagination. If my studies were not under any direction at Edinburgh, in the country, it may be well imagined, they were less so. A respectable subscription library, a circulating library of ancient standing, and some

private book-shelves, were open to my random perusal, and I waded into the stream like a blind man into a ford, without the power of searching my way, unless by groping for it. My appetite for books was as ample and indiscriminating as it was indefatigable, and I since have had too frequently reason to repent that few ever read so much, and to so little purpose.

Among the valuable acquisitions I made about this time, was an acquaintance with Tasso's Jerusalem Delivered, through the flat medium of Mr Hoole's translation. But above all, I then first became acquainted with Bishop Percy's Reliques of Ancient Poetry. As I had been from infancy devoted to legendary lore of this nature, and only reluctantly withdrew my attention, from the scarcity of materials and the rudeness of those which I possessed, it may be imagined, but cannot be described, with what delight I saw pieces of the same kind which had amused my childhood, and still continued in secret the Delilahs of my imagination, considered as the subject of sober research, grave commentary, and apt illustration, by an editor who shewed his poetical genius was capable of emulating the best qualities of what his pious labour preserved. I remember well the spot where I read these volumes for the first time. It was beneath a huge platanus-tree, in the ruins of what had been intended for an old-fashioned arbour in the *garden* I have mentioned. The summer-day sped onward so fast, that notwithstanding the sharp appetite of thirteen, I forgot the hour of dinner, was sought for with anxiety, and was still found entranced in my intellectual banquet. To read and to remember was in this instance the same thing, and henceforth I overwhelmed my school-fellows, and all who would hearken to me, with tragical recitations from the ballads of Bishop Percy. The first time, too, I could scrape a few shillings together, which were not common occurrences with me, I bought unto myself a copy of these beloved volumes; nor do I believe I

ever read a book half so frequently, or with half the enthusiasm. About this period also I became acquainted with the works of Richardson, and those of Mackenzie—(whom in later years I became entitled to call my friend)—with Fielding, Smollet, and some others of our best novelists.

To this period also I can trace distinctly the awaking of that delightful feeling for the beauties of natural objects which has never since deserted me. The neighbourhood of Kelso, the most beautiful, if not the most romantic village in Scotland, is eminently calculated to awaken these ideas. It presents objects, not only grand in themselves, but venerable from their association. The meeting of two superb rivers, the Tweed and the Teviot, both renowned in song—the ruins of an ancient Abbey—the more distant vestiges of Roxburgh Castle—the modern mansion of Fleurs, which is so situated as to combine the ideas of ancient baronial grandeur with those of modern taste—are in themselves objects of the first class; yet are so mixed, united, and melted among a thousand other beauties of a less prominent description, that they harmonize into one general picture, and please rather by unison than by concord. I believe I have written unintelligibly upon this subject, but it is fitter for the pencil than the pen. The romantic feelings which I have described as predominating in my mind, naturally rested upon and associated themselves with these grand features of the landscape around me; and the historical incidents, or traditional legends connected with many of them, gave to my admiration a sort of intense impression of reverence, which at times made my heart feel too big for its bosom. From this time the love of natural beauty, more especially when combined with ancient ruins, or remains of our fathers' piety or splendour, became with me an insatiable passion, which, if circumstances had permitted, I would willingly have gratified by travelling over half the globe.

I was recalled to Edinburgh about the time when the College meets, and put at once to the Humanity class, under Mr Hill, and the first Greek class, taught by Mr Dalzell. The former held the reins of discipline very loosely, and though beloved by his students—for he was a good-natured man as well as a good scholar—he had not the art of exciting our attention as well as liking. This was a dangerous character with whom to trust one who relished labour as little as I did; and amid the riot of his class I speedily lost much of what I had learned under Adam and Whale. At the Greek class, I might have made a better figure, for Professor Dalzell maintained a great deal of authority, and was not only himself an admirable scholar, but was always deeply interested in the progress of his students. But here lay the villany. Almost all my companions who had left the High School at the same time with myself, had acquired a smattering of Greek before they came to College. I, alas! had none; and finding myself far inferior to all my fellow-students, I could hit upon no better mode of vindicating my equality than by professing my contempt for the language, and my resolution not to learn it. A youth who died early, himself an excellent Greek scholar, saw my negligence and folly with pain, instead of contempt. He came to call on me in George's Square, and pointed out in the strongest terms the silliness of the conduct I had adopted, told me I was distinguished by the name of the *Greek Blockhead*, and exhorted me to redeem my reputation while it was called to-day. My stubborn pride received this advice with sulky civility; the birth of my Mentor (whose name was Archibald, the son of an inn-keeper) did not, as I thought in my folly, authorize him to intrude upon me his advice. The other was not sharp-sighted, or his consciousness of a generous intention overcame his resentment. He offered me his daily and nightly assistance, and pledged himself to bring me forward with the foremost of my class. I felt some twinges of con-

science, but they were unable to prevail over my pride and self-conceit. The poor lad left me more in sorrow than in anger, nor did we ever meet again. All hopes of my progress in the Greek were now over; insomuch that when we were required to write essays on the authors we had studied, I had the audacity to produce a composition in which I weighed Homer against Ariosto, and pronounced him wanting in the balance. I supported this heresy by a profusion of bad reading and flimsy argument. The wrath of the Professor was extreme, while at the same time he could not suppress his surprise at the quantity of out-of-the-way knowledge which I displayed. He pronounced upon me the severe sentence—that dunce I was, and dunce was to remain—which, however, my excellent and learned friend lived to revoke over a bottle of Burgundy, at our literary Club at Fortune's, of which he was a distinguished member.

Meanwhile, as if to eradicate my slightest tincture of Greek, I fell ill during the middle of Mr Dalzell's second class, and migrated a second time to Kelso—where I again continued a long time reading what and how I pleased, and of course reading nothing but what afforded me immediate entertainment. The only thing which saved my mind from utter dissipation, was that turn for historical pursuit, which never abandoned me even at the idlest period. I had forsworn the Latin classics for no reason I know of, unless because they were akin to the Greek; but the occasional perusal of Buchanan's history, that of Mathew of Paris, and other monkish chronicles, kept up a kind of familiarity with the language even in its rudest state. But I forgot the very letters of the Greek alphabet; a loss never to be repaired, considering what that language is, and who they were who employed it in their compositions.

About this period—or soon afterwards—my father judged it proper I should study mathematics; a study upon which I entered with all the ardour of novelty. My tutor was

an aged person, Dr MacFait, who had in his time been distinguished as a teacher of this science. Age, however, and some domestic inconveniences, had diminished his pupils, and lessened his authority amongst the few who remained. I think, that had I been more fortunately placed for instruction, or had I had the spur of emulation, I might have made some progress in this science, of which, under the circumstances I have mentioned, I only acquired a very superficial smattering.

In other studies I was rather more fortunate. I made some progress in Ethics under Professor John Bruce, and was selected as one of his students whose progress he approved, to read an essay before Principal Robertson. I was farther instructed in Moral Philosophy at the class of Mr Dugald Stewart, whose striking and impressive eloquence riveted the attention even of the most volatile student. To sum up my academical studies, I attended the class of History, then taught by the present Lord Woodhouselee, and, as far as I remember, no others, excepting those of the Civil and Municipal Law. So that, if my learning be flimsy and inaccurate, the reader must have some compassion even for an idle workman who had so narrow a foundation to build upon. If, however, it should ever fall to the lot of youth to peruse these pages—let such a reader remember, that it is with the deepest regret that I recollect in my manhood the opportunities of learning which I neglected in my youth; that through every part of my literary career I have felt pinched and hampered by my own ignorance; and that I would at this moment give half the reputation I have had the good fortune to acquire, if by doing so I could rest the remaining part upon a sound foundation of learning and science.

I imagine my father's reason for sending me to so few classes in the College, was a desire that I should apply myself particularly to my legal studies. He had not determined whether I should fill the situation of an Advocate or a

Writer; but judiciously considering the technical knowledge of the latter to be useful at least, if not essential, to a barrister, he resolved I should serve the ordinary apprenticeship of five years to his own profession. I accordingly entered into indentures with my father about 1785–6, and entered upon the dry and barren wilderness of forms and conveyances.

I cannot reproach myself with being entirely an idle apprentice—far less, as the reader might reasonably have expected,

> "A clerk foredoom'd my father's soul to cross."

The drudgery, indeed, of the office I disliked, and the confinement I altogether detested; but I loved my father, and I felt the rational pride and pleasure of rendering myself useful to him. I was ambitious also; and among my companions in labour, the only way to gratify ambition was to labour hard and well. Other circumstances reconciled me in some measure to the confinement. The allowance for copy-money furnished a little fund for the *menus plaisirs* of the circulating library and the Theatre; and this was no trifling incentive to labour. When actually at the oar, no man could pull it harder than I; and I remember writing upwards of 120 folio pages with no interval either for food or rest. Again, the hours of attendance on the office were lightened by the power of choosing my own books, and reading them in my own way, which often consisted in beginning at the middle or the end of a volume. A deceased friend, who was a fellow-apprentice with me, used often to express his surprise that, after such a hop-step-and-jump perusal, I knew as much of the book as he had been able to acquire from reading it in the usual manner. My desk usually contained a store of most miscellaneous volumes, especially works of fiction of every kind, which were my supreme delight. I might except novels, unless those of the better and higher class; for though I read many of them,

yet it was with more selection than might have been expected. The whole Jemmy and Jenny Jessamy tribe I abhorred; and it required the art of Burney, or the feeling of Mackenzie, to fix my attention upon a domestic tale. But all that was adventurous and romantic I devoured without much discrimination, and I really believe I have read as much nonsense of this class as any man now living. Everything which touched on knight-errantry was particularly acceptable to me, and I soon attempted to imitate what I so greatly admired. My efforts, however, were in the manner of the tale-teller, not of the bard.

My greatest intimate, from the days of my school-tide, was Mr John Irving, now a Writer to the Signet.[1] We lived near each other, and by joint agreement were wont, each of us, to compose a romance for the other's amusement. These legends, in which the martial and the miraculous always predominated, we rehearsed to each other during our walks, which were usually directed to the most solitary spots about Arthur's Seat and Salisbury Crags. We naturally sought seclusion, for we were conscious no small degree of ridicule would have attended our amusement, if the nature of it had become known. Whole holidays were spent in this singular pastime, which continued

[1] [In speaking of the High School period, Mr John Irving says: "He began early to collect old ballads, and as my mother could repeat a great many, he used to come and learn those she could recite to him. He used to get all the copies of these ballads he could, and select the best." These, no doubt, were among the germs of a collection of ballads in six little volumes, which, from the handwriting, had been begun at this early period, and which is still preserved at Abbotsford. And it appears, that at least as early a date must be ascribed to another collection of little humorous stories in prose, the *Penny Chap-books*, as they are called, still in high favour among the lower classes in Scotland, which stands on the same shelf. In a letter of 1830, he states that he had bound up things of this kind to the extent of several volumes, before he was ten years old.—Ed.]

for two or three years, and had, I believe, no small effect in directing the turn of my imagination to the chivalrous and romantic in poetry and prose.

Meanwhile, the translations of Mr Hoole having made me acquainted with Tasso and Ariosto, I learned from his notes on the latter, that the Italian language contained a fund of romantic lore. A part of my earnings was dedicated to an Italian class which I attended twice a-week, and rapidly acquired some proficiency. I had previously renewed and extended my knowledge of the French language, from the same principle of romantic research. Tressan's romances, the Bibliothèque Bleue, and Bibliothèque de Romans, were already familiar to me; and I now acquired similar intimacy with the works of Dante, Boiardo, Pulci, and other eminent Italian authors. I fastened also, like a tiger, upon every collection of old songs or romances which chance threw in my way, or which my scrutiny was able to discover on the dusty shelves of James Sibbald's circulating library in the Parliament Square. This collection, now dismantled and dispersed, contained at that time many rare and curious works, seldom found in such a collection. Mr Sibbald himself, a man of rough manners but of some taste and judgment, cultivated music and poetry, and in his shop I had a distant view of some literary characters, besides the privilege of ransacking the stores of old French and Italian books, which were in little demand among the bulk of his subscribers. Here I saw the unfortunate Andrew Macdonald, author of Vimonda; and here, too, I saw at a distance, the boast of Scotland, Robert Burns. Of the latter I shall presently have occasion to speak more fully.[1]

[1] ["As for Burns," he writes, "I may truly say, '*Virgilium vidi tantum.*' I was a lad of fifteen in 1786–7, when he came first to Edinburgh, but had sense and feeling enough to be much interested in his poetry, and would have given the world to know him; but I had very little acquaintance with any literary people, and still less with the gentry of the west country,—the two sets that he most

I am inadvertently led to confound dates while I talk of this remote period, for, as I have no notes, it is impossible for me to remember with accuracy the progress of studies, if they deserve the name, so irregular and miscellaneous.

frequented. Mr Thomas Grierson was at that time a clerk of my father's. He knew Burns, and promised to ask him to his lodgings to dinner, but had no opportunity to keep his word, otherwise I might have seen more of this distinguished man. As it was, I saw him one day at the late venerable Professor Fergusson's, where there were several gentlemen of literary reputation, among whom I remember the celebrated Mr Dugald Stewart. Of course we youngsters sate silent, looked and listened. The only thing I remember which was remarkable in Burns' manner, was the effect produced upon him by a print of Bunbury's, representing a soldier lying dead on the snow, his dog sitting in misery on the one side, on the other his widow, with a child in her arms. These lines were written beneath,—

> 'Cold on Canadian hills, or Minden's plain,
> Perhaps that parent wept her soldier slain;
> Bent o'er her babe, her eye dissolved in dew;
> The big drops, mingling with the milk he drew,
> Gave the sad presage of his future years,
> The child of misery baptized in tears.'

Burns seemed much affected by the print, or rather the ideas which it suggested to his mind. He actually shed tears. He asked whose the lines were, and it chanced that nobody but myself remembered that they occur in a half-forgotten poem of Langhorne's, called by the unpromising title of 'The Justice of the Peace.' I whispered my information to a friend present, who mentioned it to Burns, who rewarded me with a look and a word, which, though of mere civility, I then received, and still recollect, with very great pleasure. . . . . His conversation expressed perfect self-confidence, without the slightest presumption. Among the men who were the most learned of their time and country, he expressed himself with perfect firmness, but without the least intrusive forwardness; and when he differed in opinion, he did not hesitate to express it firmly, yet at the same time with modesty. I do not remember any part of his conversation distinctly enough to be quoted, nor did I ever see him again, except in the street, where he did not recognise me, as I could not expect he should."—*Letter to J. G. L.* 1827.]

But about the second year of my apprenticeship, my health, which from rapid growth and other causes, had been hitherto rather uncertain and delicate, was affected by the breaking of a blood-vessel. The regimen I had to undergo on this occasion was far from agreeable. It was Spring, and the weather raw and cold, yet I was confined to bed with a single blanket, and bled and blistered till I scarcely had a pulse left. I had all the appetite of a growing boy, but was prohibited any sustenance beyond what was absolutely necessary for the support of nature, and that in vegetables alone. Above all, with a considerable disposition to talk, I was not permitted to open my lips without one or two old ladies who watched my couch being ready at once to souse upon me, "imposing silence with a stilly sound."[1] My only refuge was reading and playing at chess. To the romances and poetry, which I chiefly delighted in, I had always added the study of history, especially as connected with military events. I was encouraged in this latter study by a tolerable acquaintance with geography, and by the opportunities I had enjoyed while with Mr MacFait to learn the meaning of the more ordinary terms of fortification. While, therefore, I lay in this dreary and silent solitude, I fell upon the resource of illustrating the battles I read of by the childish expedient of arranging shells, and seeds, and peebles, so as to represent encountering armies. Diminutive cross-bows were contrived to mimic artillery, and with the assistance of a friendly carpenter, I contrived to model a fortress, which, like that of uncle Toby, represented whatever place happened to be uppermost in my imagination. I fought my way thus through Vertot's Knights of Malta—a book which, as it hovered between history and romance, was exceedingly dear to me; and Orme's interesting and beautiful History of Indostan, whose copious plans, aided by the clear and luminous explanations of the author, rendered my

[1] Home's *Tragedy of Douglas.*

imitative amusement peculiarly easy. Other moments of these weary weeks were spent in looking at the Meadow Walks, by assistance of a combination of mirrors so arranged that, while lying in bed, I could see the troops march out to exercise, or any other incident which occurred on that promenade.

After one or two relapses, my constitution recovered the injury it had sustained, though for several months afterwards I was restricted to a severe vegetable diet. And I must say, in passing, that though I gained health under this necessary restriction, yet it was far from being agreeable to me, and I was affected whilst under its influence with a nervousness which I never felt before or since. A disposition to start upon slight alarms—a want of decision in feeling and acting, which has not usually been my failing, an acute sensibility to trifling inconveniences—and an unnecessary apprehension of contingent misfortunes, rise to my memory as connected with my vegetable diet, although they may very possibly have been entirely the result of the disorder, and not of the cure. Be this as it may, with this illness I bade farewell both to disease and medicine; for since that time, till the hour I am now writing, I have enjoyed a state of the most robust health, having only had to complain of occasional headaches or stomachic affections when I have been long without taking exercise, or have lived too convivially—the latter having been occasionally, though not habitually, the error of my youth, as the former has been of my advanced life.

My frame gradually became hardened with my constitution, and being both tall and muscular, I was rather disfigured than disabled by my lameness. This personal disadvantage did not prevent me from taking much exercise on horseback, and making long journeys on foot, in the course of which I often walked from twenty to thirty miles a day. A distinct instance occurs to me. I remember walking with poor James Ramsay, my fellow-ap-

prentice, now no more, and two other friends, to breakfast at Prestonpans. We spent the forenoon in visiting the ruins at Seton and the field of battle at Preston—dined at Prestonpans on *tiled haddocks* very sumptuously—drank half a bottle of port each, and returned in the evening. This could not be less than thirty miles, nor do I remember being at all fatigued upon the occasion.[1]

These excursions on foot or horseback formed by far my most favourite amusement. I have all my life delighted in travelling, though I have never enjoyed that pleasure upon a large scale. It was a propensity which I sometimes in-

[1] [If he is quite accurate in referring (*Preface to Waverley Novels*) his first acquaintance with the Highlands to his fifteenth year, this incident belongs to the first season of his apprenticeship. His father had, among a rather numerous list of Highland clients, Alexander Stewart of Invernahyle, an enthusiastic Jacobite, who had survived to recount, in secure and vigorous old age, his active experiences in the insurrections both of 1715 and 1745. He had, it appears, attracted Walter's attention and admiration at a very early date; for he speaks of having "seen him in arms," and heard him "exult in the prospect of drawing his claymore once more before he died," when Paul Jones threatened the descent on Edinburgh; which occurred in September 1779. The eager delight with which the young apprentice now listened to the tales of this fine old man's early days, produced an invitation to his residence among the mountains; and to this excursion he probably devoted the few weeks of an autumnal vacation—whether in 1786 or 1787, it is of no great consequence to ascertain. It was, however, to his allotted task of enforcing the execution of a legal instrument against some Maclarens, refractory tenants of Stewart of Appin, brother-in-law to Invernahyle, that Scott owed his introduction to the scenery of the Lady of the Lake. "An escort of a sergeant and six men," he says, "was obtained from a Highland Regiment lying in Stirling, and the author, then a writer's apprentice, equivalent to the honourable situation of an attorney's clerk, was invested with the superintendence of the expedition. The sergeant was absolutely a Highland Sergeant Kite, full of stories of Rob Roy and of himself, and a very good companion."—*Introduction to Rob Roy*.—ED.]

dulged so unduly as to alarm and vex my parents. Wood, water, wilderness itself, had an inexpressible charm for me, and I had a dreamy way of going much further than I intended, so that unconsciously my return was protracted, and my parents had sometimes serious cause of uneasiness. For example, I once set out with Mr George Abercromby[1] (the son of the immortal General), Mr William Clerk, and some others, to fish in the lake above Howgate, and the stream which descends from it into the Esk. We breakfasted at Howgate, and fished the whole day; and while we were on our return next morning, I was easily seduced by William Clerk, then a great intimate, to visit Pennycuik-House, the seat of his family. Here he and John Irving, and I for their sake, were overwhelmed with kindness by the late Sir John Clerk and his lady, the present Dowager Lady Clerk. The pleasure of looking at fine pictures, the beauty of the place, and the flattering hospitality of the owners, drowned all recollection of home for a day or two. Meanwhile our companions, who had walked on without being aware of our digression, returned to Edinburgh without us, and excited no small alarm in my father's household. At length, however, they became accustomed to my escapades. My father used to protest to me on such occasions that he thought I was born to be a strolling pedlar; and though the prediction was intended to mortify my conceit, I am not sure that I altogether disliked it. I was now familiar with Shakspeare, and thought of Autolycus's song—

> "Jog on, jog on, the foot-path way,
> And merrily hent the stile-a;
> A merry heart goes all the day,
> Your sad tires in a mile-a."

My principal object in these excursions was the pleasure

[1] Now Lord Abercromby.—1826.

of seeing romantic scenery, or what afforded me at least equal pleasure, the places which had been distinguished by remarkable historical events. The delight with which I regarded the former, of course had general approbation, but I often found it difficult to procure sympathy with the interest I felt in the latter. Yet to me, the wandering over the field of Bannockburn was the source of more exquisite pleasure than gazing upon the celebrated landscape from the battlements of Stirling castle. I do not by any means infer that I was dead to the feeling of picturesque scenery; on the contrary, few delighted more in its general effect. But I was unable with the eye of a painter to dissect the various parts of the scene, to comprehend how the one bore upon the other, to estimate the effect which various features of the view had in producing its leading and general effect. I have never, indeed, been capable of doing this with precision or nicety, though my latter studies have led me to amend and arrange my original ideas upon the subject. Even the humble ambition, which I long cherished, of making sketches of those places which interested me, from a defect of eye or of hand was totally ineffectual. After long study and many efforts, I was unable to apply the elements of perspective or of shade to the scene before me, and was obliged to relinquish in despair an art which I was most anxious to practise. But shew me an old castle or a field of battle, and I was at home at once, filled it with its combatants in their proper costume, and overwhelmed my hearers by the enthusiasm of my description. In crossing Magus Moor, near St Andrews, the spirit moved me to give a picture of the assassination of the Archbishop of St Andrews to some fellow-travellers with whom I was accidentally associated, and one of them, though well acquainted with the story, protested my narrative had frightened away his night's sleep. I mention this to shew the distinction between a sense of the picturesque in action and in scenery. If I have since been

able in poetry to trace with some success the principles of the latter, it has always been with reference to its general and leading features, or under some alliance with moral feeling; and even this proficiency has cost me study.—Meanwhile I endeavoured to make amends for my ignorance of drawing, by adopting a sort of technical memory respecting the scenes I visited. Wherever I went I cut a piece of a branch from a tree—these constituted what I called my log-book; and I intended to have a set of chessmen out of them, each having reference to the place where it was cut—as the kings from Falkland and Holy-Rood; the queens from Queen Mary's yew tree at Crookston; the bishops from abbeys or episcopal palaces; the knights from baronial residences; the rooks from royal fortresses; and the pawns generally from places worthy of historical note. But this whimsical design I never carried into execution.

With music it was even worse than with painting. My mother was anxious we should at least learn Psalmody; but the incurable defects of my voice and ear soon drove my teacher to despair.[1] It is only by long practice that I

[1] The late Alexander Campbell, a warm-hearted man, and an enthusiast in Scottish music, which he sang most beautifully, had this ungrateful task imposed on him. He was a man of many accomplishments, but dashed with a *bizarrerie* of temper which made them useless to their proprietor. He wrote several books—as a Tour in Scotland, &c.;—and he made an advantageous marriage, but fell nevertheless into distressed circumstances, which I had the pleasure of relieving, if I could not remove. His sense of gratitude was very strong, and shewed itself oddly in one respect. He would never allow that I had a bad ear; but contended, that if I did not understand music, it was because I did not choose to learn it. But when he attended us in George's Square, our neighbour, Lady Cumming, sent to beg the boys might not be all flogged precisely at the same hour, as, though she had no doubt the punishment was deserved, the noise of the concord was really dreadful.

have acquired the power of selecting or distinguishing melodies; and although now few things delight or affect me more than a simple tune sung with feeling, yet I am sensible that even this pitch of musical taste has only been gained by attention and habit, and, as it were, by my feeling of the words being associated with the tune. I have therefore been usually unsuccessful in composing words to a tune, although my friend Dr Clarke, and other musical composers, have sometimes been able to make a happy union between their music and my poetry.

In other points, however, I began to make some amends for the irregularity of my education. It is well known that in Edinburgh one great spur to emulation among youthful students is in those associations called *literary societies*, formed not only for the purpose of debate, but of composition. These undoubtedly have some disadvantages, where a bold, petulant, and disputatious temper happens to be combined with considerable information and talent. Still, however, in order to such a person being actually spoiled by his mixing in such debates, his talents must be of a very rare nature, or his effrontery must be proof to every species of assault; for there is generally, in a well-selected society of this nature, talent sufficient to meet the forwardest, and satire enough to penetrate the most undaunted. I am particularly obliged to this sort of club for introducing me about my seventeenth year into the society which at one time I had entirely dropped; for, from the time of my illness at college, I had had little or no intercourse with any of my class-companions, one or two only excepted. Now, however, about 1788, I began to feel and take my ground in society. A ready wit, a good deal of enthusiasm, and a perception that soon ripen-

Robert was the only one of our family who could sing, though my father was musical, and a performer on the violoncello at the *gentlemen's concerts*.—1826.

ed into tact and observation of character, rendered me an acceptable companion to many young men whose acquisitions in philosophy and science were infinitely superior to any thing I could boast.

In the business of these societies—for I was a member of more than one successively—I cannot boast of having made any great figure. I never was a good speaker, unless upon some subject which strongly animated my feelings; and, as I was totally unaccustomed to composition, as well as to the art of generalizing my ideas upon any subject, my literary essays were but very poor work. I never attempted them unless when compelled to do so by the regulations of the society, and then I was like the Lord of Castle Rackrent, who was obliged to cut down a tree to get a few faggots to boil the kettle; for the quantity of ponderous and miscellaneous knowledge which I really possessed on many subjects, was not easily condensed, or brought to bear upon the object I wished particularly to become master of. Yet there occurred opportunities when this odd lumber of my brain, especially that which was connected with the recondite parts of history, did me, as Hamlet says, "yeoman's service." My memory of events was like one of the large, old-fashioned stone-cannons of the Turks—very difficult to load well and discharge, but making a powerful effect when by good chance any object did come within range of its shot. Such fortunate opportunities of exploding with effect maintained my literary character among my companions, with whom I soon met with great indulgence and regard. The persons with whom I chiefly lived at this period of my youth were William Clerk, already mentioned; James Edmonstoune, of Newton; George Abercromby; Adam Fergusson, son of the celebrated Professor Fergusson, and who combined the lightest and most airy temper with the best and kindest disposition; John Irving, already mentioned; the Honourable Thomas Douglas, now Earl of Selkirk; David

Boyle,[1]—and two or three others, who sometimes plunged deeply into politics and metaphysics, and not unfrequently "doffed the world aside, and bid it pass."

Looking back on these times, I cannot applaud in all respects the way in which our days were spent. There was too much idleness, and sometimes too much conviviality: but our hearts were warm, our minds honourably bent on knowledge and literary distinction; and if I, certainly the least informed of the party, may be permitted to bear witness, we were not without the fair and creditable means of attaining the distinction to which we aspired. In this society I was naturally led to correct my former useless course of reading; for—feeling myself greatly inferior to my companions in metaphysical philosophy and other branches of regular study—I laboured, not without some success, to acquire at least such a portion of knowledge as might enable me to maintain my rank in conversation. In this I succeeded pretty well; but unfortunately then, as often since through my life, I incurred the deserved ridicule of my friends from the superficial nature of my acquisitions, which being, in the mercantile phrase, *got up* for society, very often proved flimsy in the texture; and thus the gifts of an uncommonly retentive memory and acute powers of perception were sometimes detrimental to their possessor, by encouraging him to a presumptuous reliance upon them.[2]

Amidst these studies, and in this society, the time of my

[1] Now Lord Justice-Clerk.—1826.

[2] [Scott was admitted into the most celebrated of the Edinburgh debating Societies, *The Speculative*, in January 1791. Soon after he was elected their librarian; and in the November following, he became also their secretary and treasurer:—all which appointments indicate the reliance placed on his careful habits of business, the fruit of his chamber education. The minutes kept in his hand-writing attest the strict regularity of his attention to the affairs of the club; but they shew also, as do all his early letters,

apprenticeship elapsed; and in 1790, or thereabouts, it became necessary that I should seriously consider to which department of the law I was to attach myself. My father behaved with the most parental kindness. He offered, if I preferred his own profession, immediately to take me into partnership with him, which, though his business was much diminished, still afforded me an immediate prospect of a handsome independence. But he did not disguise his wish

a strange carelessness in spelling. His constant good temper softened the asperities of debate, while his multifarious lore, and the quaint humour with which he enlivened its display, made him more a favourite as a speaker than some whose powers of rhetoric were far above his.

Mr Francis Jeffrey, on the first night of his attendance at *The Speculative*, heard Scott read an essay on ballads, which so much interested the new member, that he requested to be introduced to him. Mr Jeffrey called on him next evening, and found him "in a small den, on the sunk floor of his father's house in George's Square, surrounded with dingy books," from which they adjourned to a tavern, and supped together. Such was the commencement of an acquaintance, which by degrees ripened into friendship, between the two most distinguished men of letters whom Edinburgh produced in their time. I may add here the description of that early *den*, with which I am favoured by a lady of Scott's family:—"Walter had soon begun to collect out-of-the-way things of all sorts. He had more books than shelves; a small painted cabinet, with Scotch and Roman coins in it, and so forth. A claymore and Lochaber axe, given him by old Invernahyle, mounted guard on a little print of Prince Charlie; and *Broughton's Saucer* was hooked up against the wall below it."

But I must explain *Broughton's Saucer*. Mrs Scott's curiosity was strongly excited one autumn by the regular appearance, at a certain hour every evening, of a sedan chair, to deposit a person carefully muffled up in a mantle, who was immediately ushered into her husband's private room, and commonly remained with him there until long after the usual bed-time of this orderly family. Mr Scott answered her repeated inquiries with a vagueness which irritated the lady's feelings more and more; until, at last, she could bear the thing no longer; but one evening, just

that I should relinquish this situation to my younger brother, and embrace the more ambitious profession of the bar. I had little hesitation in making my choice—for I was never very fond of money; and in no other particular do the professions admit of a comparison. Besides, I knew and felt the inconveniences attached to that of a Writer; and I thought (like a young man) many of them were "ingenio non subeunda meo."[1] The appearance of personal depen-

as she heard the bell ring as for the stranger's chair to carry him off, she made her appearance within the forbidden parlour with a salver in her hand, observing, that she thought the gentlemen had sat so long, they would be the better of a dish of tea, and had ventured accordingly to bring some for their acceptance. The stranger, a person of distinguished appearance, and richly dressed, bowed to the lady, and accepted a cup; but her husband knit his brows, and refused very coldly to partake the refreshment. A moment afterwards the visitor withdrew—and Mr Scott lifting up the window-sash, took the cup, which he had left empty on the table, and tossed it out upon the pavement. The lady exclaimed for her china, but was put to silence by her husband's saying, "I can forgive your little curiosity, madam, but you must pay the penalty. I may admit into my house, on a piece of business, persons wholly unworthy to be treated as guests by my wife. Neither lip of me nor of mine comes after Mr Murray of Broughton's." This was the unhappy man who, after attending Prince Charles Stuart as his secretary throughout the greater part of his expedition, condescended to redeem his own life and fortune by bearing evidence against the noblest of his late master's adherents, when

> "Pitied by gentle hearts Kilmarnock died—
> The brave, Balmerino, were on thy side."

When confronted with Sir John Douglas of Kelhead (ancestor of the Marquess of Queensberry), before the Privy Council in St James's, the prisoner was asked, "Do you know this witness?" "Not I," answered Douglas; "I once knew a person who bore the designation of Murray of Broughton—but that was a gentleman and a man of honour, and one that could hold up his head!" The saucer belonging to Broughton's tea-cup chanced to be preserved; and Walter had made prize of it.—ED.]

[1] Milton, *Eleg. Lib. I.*

dence which that profession requires was disagreeable to me; the sort of connexion between the client and the attorney seemed to render the latter more subservient than was quite agreeable to my nature; and, besides, I had seen many sad examples, while overlooking my father's business, that the utmost exertions, and the best meant services, do not secure the *man of business*, as he is called, from great loss, and most ungracious treatment on the part of his employers. The bar, though I was conscious of my deficiencies as a public speaker, was the line of ambition and liberty; it was that also for which most of my contemporary friends were destined. And, lastly, although I would willingly have relieved my father of the labours of his business, yet I saw plainly we could not have agreed on some particulars if we had attempted to conduct it together, and that I should disappoint his expectations if I did not turn to the bar. So to that object my studies were directed with great ardour and perseverance during the years 1789, 1790, 1791, 1792.

In the usual course of study, the Roman or Civil Law was the first object of my attention—the second, the Municipal Law of Scotland. In the course of reading on both subjects, I had the advantage of studying in conjunction with my friend William Clerk, a man of the most acute intellects and powerful apprehension, and who, should he ever shake loose the fetters of indolence by which he has been hitherto trammelled, cannot fail to be distinguished in the highest degree. We attended the regular classes of both laws in the University of Edinburgh. The Civil Law chair, now worthily filled by Mr Alexander Irving, might at that time be considered as in *abeyance*, since the person by whom it was occupied had never been fit for the situation, and was then almost in a state of dotage. But the Scotch Law lectures were those of Mr David Hume, who still continues to occupy that situation with as much honour to himself as advantage to his country. I copied over his

lectures twice with my own hand, from notes taken in the class, and when I have had occasion to consult them, I can never sufficiently admire the penetration and clearness of conception which were necessary to the arrangement of the fabric of law, formed originally under the strictest influence of feudal principles, and innovated, altered, and broken in upon by the change of times, of habits, and of manners, until it resembles some ancient castle, partly entire, partly ruinous, partly dilapidated, patched and altered during the succession of ages by a thousand additions and combinations, yet still exhibiting, with the marks of its antiquity, symptoms of the skill and wisdom of its founders, and capable of being analyzed and made the subject of a methodical plan by an architect who can understand the various styles of the different ages in which it was subjected to alteration. Such an architect has Mr Hume been to the law of Scotland, neither wandering into fanciful and abstruse disquisitions, which are the more proper subject of the antiquary, nor satisfied with presenting to his pupils a dry and undigested detail of the laws in their present state, but combining the past state of our legal enactments with the present, and tracing clearly and judiciously the changes which took place, and the causes which led to them.

Under these auspices, I commenced my legal studies. A little parlour was assigned me in my father's house, which was spacious and convenient, and I took the exclusive possession of my new realms with all the feelings of novelty and liberty. Let me do justice to the only years of my life in which I applied to learning with stern, steady, and undeviating industry. The rule of my friend Clerk and myself was, that we should mutually qualify ourselves for undergoing an examination upon certain points of law every morning in the week, Sundays excepted. This was at first to have taken place alternately at each other's houses, but we soon discovered that my friend's resolution was inadequate to severing him from his couch at the early

hour fixed for this exercitation. Accordingly, I agreed to go every morning to his house, which, being at the extremity of Prince's Street, New Town, was a walk of two miles. With great punctuality, however, I beat him up to his task every morning before seven o'clock, and in the course of two summers, we went, by way of question and answer, through the whole of Heineccius's Analysis of the Institutes and Pandects, as well as through the smaller copy of Erskine's Institutes of the Law of Scotland. This course of study enabled us to pass with credit the usual trials, which, by the regulations of the Faculty of Advocates, must be undergone by every candidate for admission into their body. My friend William Clerk and I passed these ordeals on the same days—namely, the Civil Law trial on the [30th June 1791], and the Scots Law trial on the [6th July 1792]. On the [11th July 1792], we both assumed the gown with all its duties and honours.

My progress in life during these two or three years had been gradually enlarging my acquaintance, and facilitating my entrance into good company. My father and mother, already advanced in life, saw little society at home, excepting that of near relations, or upon particular occasions, so that I was left to form connexions in a great measure for myself. It is not difficult for a youth with a real desire to please and be pleased, to make his way into good society in Edinburgh—or indeed anywhere; and my family connexions, if they did not greatly further, had nothing to embarrass my progress. I was a gentleman, and so welcome anywhere, if so be I could behave myself, as Tony Lumpkin says, "in a concatenation accordingly."

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CHAPTER II.

Call to the Bar—Early Friendships and Pursuits—Excursions to the Highlands and Border—Light-Horse Volunteers—Disappointment in Love—Publication of Ballads after Bürger.—1792–1797.

WALTER SCOTT, the eldest son of Robert of Sandy-Knowe, appears to have been the first of the family that ever adopted a town life, or anything claiming to be classed among the learned professions. His branch of the law, however, could not in those days be advantageously prosecuted without extensive connexions in the country; his own were too respectable not to be of much service to him in his calling, and they were cultivated accordingly. His professional visits to Roxburghshire and Ettrick Forest were, in the vigour of his life, very frequent; and though he was never supposed to have any tincture either of romance or poetry in his composition, he retained to the last a warm affection for his native district, with a certain reluctant flavour of the old feelings and prejudices of the Borderer. I have little to add to Sir Walter's short and respectful notice of his father, except that I have heard it confirmed by the testimony of many less partial observers. "He passed from the cradle to the grave," says his daughter-in-law, Mrs Thomas Scott, "without making an enemy or losing a friend. He was a most affectionate parent, and if he discouraged, rather than otherwise, his son's early devotion to the pursuits which led him to the height of literary eminence, it was only because he did not understand what such things meant, and considered it his duty to keep his young man to that path in which good sense and industry might, humanly speaking, be thought sure of success." We have, according to William Clerk, a very accurate representation of the old gentleman in the elder Fairford of Redgauntlet; and there is as little doubt that Walter drew from himself

in the younger Fairford, and from his friend Clerk in the Darsie Latimer of that tale.

His mother was short of stature, and by no means comely, at least after the days of her early youth. The physiognomy of the poet bore, if their portraits may be trusted, no resemblance to either of his parents; while, on the other hand, a very strong likeness to him is observable in the pictures both of the shrewd farmer and sportsman, Robert of Sandy-Knowe, and of the venerable Jacobite, *Beardie*. But Scott's mother, there is no doubt, was, in talents as well as tastes, superior to her husband. She had strong powers of observation, with a lively relish for the humorous, and was noted for her skill in story-telling. She had, moreover, like Irving's mother, a love of ancient ballads and Scotch traditions and legends of all sorts, and her Calvinistic prejudices did not save her from the worship of Shakspeare. Her sister, Christian Rutherford, appears to have been still more accomplished; and as she was comparatively young, the intimacy between her and her nephew was more like what occurs commonly between a youth and an elder sister. In the house of his uncle, Dr Rutherford, Scott must have had access, from his earliest days, to a scientific and scholarlike circle of society. His own parents, too, were, as we have seen, personal friends of John Home, the author of Douglas, at whose villa near Edinburgh young Walter was a frequent visitor: but, above all, his intimacy with the son of Dr Adam Fergusson, the moralist and historian, who was then one of the chief ornaments of the University, afforded easy opportunity of mixing, in as far as his ambition might gradually aspire, with the most intellectual and cultivated society of his native place. It was under that roof that he conversed with Burns when in his seventeenth year.

I shall only add to what he sets down on the subject of his early academical studies, that in this, as in almost every case, he appears to have underrated his own attainments.

He had, indeed, no pretensions to the name of an extensive, far less of an accurate, Latin scholar; but he could read, I believe, any Latin author, of any age, so as to catch without difficulty his meaning; and although his favourite Latin poet, as well as historian, in later days, was Buchanan, he had preserved, or subsequently acquired, a strong relish for some others of more ancient date. I may mention, in particular, Lucan and Claudian. The autobiography has informed us of the early period at which he enjoyed the real Tasso and Ariosto. I presume he had at least as soon as this enabled himself to read Gil Blas in the original; and, in all probability, we may refer to the same time of his life, or one not much later, his acquisition of as much Spanish as served for the Guerras Civiles de Grenada, Lazarillo de Tormes, and, above all, Don Quixote. He read all these languages in after life with about the same facility. I never but once heard him attempt to speak any of them, and that was when some of the courtiers of Charles X. came to Abbotsford, soon after that unfortunate prince took up his residence for the second time at Holyroodhouse. Finding that one or two of these gentlemen could speak no English at all, he made some efforts to amuse them in their own language after the champagne had been passing briskly round the table; and I was amused next morning with the expression of one of the party, who, alluding to the sort of reading in which Sir Walter seemed to have chiefly occupied himself, said—"Mon Dieu! comme il estropiait, entre deux vins, le Français du bon sire de Joinville!" Of all these tongues, as of German somewhat later, he acquired as much as was needful for his own purposes, of which a critical study of any foreign language made at no time any part. In them he sought for incidents, and he found images; but for the treasures of diction he was content to dig on British soil. He had all he wanted in the old wells of "English undefiled," and the still living, though fast shrinking, waters of that sister idiom, which

had not always, as he flattered himself, deserved the name of a dialect.

As may be said, I believe, with perfect truth of every really great man, Scott was self-educated in every branch of knowledge which he ever turned to account in the works of his genius—and he has himself told us that his real studies were those lonely and desultory ones of which he has given a copy in the first chapter of Waverley, where the hero is represented as "driving through the sea of books, like a vessel without pilot or rudder;" that is to say, obeying nothing but the strong breath of native inclination. The *literary* details of that chapter may all be considered as autobiographical.

In all the studies of the two or three years preceding his call to the bar, his chief associate was William Clerk; and, indeed, of all the connections he formed in life, I now doubt if there was one to whom he owed more. He always continued to say that Clerk was unsurpassed in strength and acuteness of faculties, by any man he had ever conversed with familiarly; and though he has left no literary monument whatever behind him, he was from youth to a good old age indefatigable in study, and rivalled, I believe, by very few of his contemporaries, either in the variety or the accuracy of his acquired knowledge. He entered zealously from the first into all Scott's antiquarian pursuits, and he it was who mainly aided and stimulated him throughout the few years which he did devote to his proper training for the profession of the bar. But these were not all the obligations: it was Clerk that first or mainly awakened his social ambition: it was he that drew him out of the company of his father's apprentices, and taught him to rise above their clubs and festivities, and the rough irregular habits of all their intervals of relaxation. It was probably very much in consequence of the tacit influence of this tie that he resolved on following the upper and more precarious branch of his profession, instead

of that in which his father's eldest son had, if he chose, the certain prospect of early independence, and every likelihood of a plentiful fortune in the end.

Yet both in his adoption, soon after that friendship began, of a somewhat superior tone of manners and habits generally, and in his ultimate decision for the bar, as well as in his strenuous preparation during a considerable space of time for that career, there is little question that another influence must have powerfully co-operated. Of the few early letters of Scott that have been preserved, almost all are addressed to Clerk, who says, "I ascribe my little handful to a sort of instinctive prophetic sense of his future greatness;"—but a great mass of letters addressed to Scott himself, during his early years, are still in being, and they are important documents in his history, for, as Southey well remarks, letters often tell more of the character of the man they are to be read by than of him who writes them. Throughout all these, then, there occurs no coarse or even jocular suggestion as to the conduct of *Scott* in that particular, as to which most youths of his then age are so apt to lay up stores of self-reproach. In that season of hot and impetuous blood he may not have escaped quite blameless; but I have the concurrent testimony of all the most intimate among his surviving associates, that he was remarkably free from such indiscretions; that while his high sense of honour shielded him from the remotest dream of tampering with female innocence, he had an instinctive delicacy about him which made him recoil with utter disgust from low and vulgar debaucheries. His friends, I have heard more than one of them confess, used often to rally him on the coldness of his nature. By degrees they discovered that he had, from almost the dawn of the passions, cherished a secret attachment, which continued, through all the most perilous stage of life, to act as a romantic charm in safeguard of virtue. This was the early and innocent affection to which we owe the

tenderest pages, not only of Redgauntlet, but of the Lay of the Last Minstrel, and of Rokeby. In all of these works the heroine has certain distinctive features, drawn from one and the same haunting dream of his manly adolescence.

It was about 1790, according to Mr William Clerk, that Scott was observed to lay aside that carelessness, not to say slovenliness, as to dress, which used to furnish matter for joking at the beginning of their acquaintance. He now did himself more justice in these little matters, became fond of mixing in general female society, and, as his friend expresses it, "began to set up for a squire of dames."

His personal appearance at this time was not unengaging. A lady of high rank, who well remembers him in the Old Assembly Rooms, says, "Young Walter Scott was a comely creature."[1] He had outgrown the sallowness of early ill health, and had a fresh brilliant complexion. His eyes were clear, open, and well set, with a changeful radiance, to which teeth of the most perfect regularity and whiteness lent their assistance, while the noble expanse and elevation of the brow gave to the whole aspect a dignity far above the charm of mere features. His smile was always delightful; and I can easily fancy the peculiar intermixture of tenderness and gravity, with playful innocent hilarity and humour in the expression, as being well calculated to fix a fair lady's eye. His figure, excepting the blemish in one limb, must in those days have been eminently handsome; tall, much above the usual standard, it was cast in the very mould of a young Hercules; the head set on with singular grace, the throat and chest after the truest model of the antique, the hands delicately finished; the whole outline that of extraordinary vigour, without as yet a touch of clumsiness. When he had acquired a little facility of manner, his conversation

[1] The late Duchess Countess of Sutherland.

must have been such as could have dispensed with any exterior advantages, and certainly brought swift forgiveness for the one unkindness of nature. I have heard him, in talking of this part of his life, say, with an arch simplicity of look and tone, which those who were familiar with him can fill in for themselves—"It was a proud night with me when I first found that a pretty young woman could think it worth her while to sit and talk with me, hour after hour, in a corner of the ball-room, while all the world were capering in our view."

I believe, however, that the "pretty young woman" here specially alluded to, had occupied his attention before he ever appeared in the Edinburgh Assembly Rooms, or any of his friends took note of him as "setting up for a squire of dames." I have been told that their acquaintance began in the Greyfriars' churchyard, where rain beginning to fall one Sunday as the congregation were dispersing, Scott happened to offer his umbrella, and the tender being accepted, so escorted *the lady of the green mantle* to her residence, which proved to be at no great distance from his own.[1] To return from church together had, it seems, grown into something like a custom before they met in society, Mrs Scott being of the party. It then appeared that she and the lady's mother had been companions in their youth, though, both living secludedly, they had scarcely seen each other for many years; and the two matrons now renewed their former intercourse. But no acquaintance appears to have existed between the fathers of the young people, until things had advanced in appearance farther than met the approbation of the good Clerk to the Signet.

Being aware that the young lady—Margaret, daughter

[1] In one of his latest essays we read—"There have been instances of love-tales being favourably received in England, when told under an umbrella, and in the middle of a shower."—*Miscellaneous Prose Works*, vol. xviii. p. 390.

of Sir John and Lady Jane Stuart Belches of Invermay, had prospects of fortune far above his son's, Mr Scott conceived it his duty to give her parents warning that he observed a degree of intimacy which, if allowed to go on, might involve the parties in pain and disappointment. He had heard his son talk of a contemplated excursion to the part of the country in which his neighbour's estates lay, and not doubting that Walter's real object was different from that which he announced, introduced himself with a frank statement that he wished no such affair to proceed, without the express sanction of those most interested in the happiness of persons as yet too young to calculate consequences for themselves.—The northern Baronet had heard nothing of the young apprentice's intended excursion, and appeared to treat the whole business very lightly. He thanked Mr Scott for his scrupulous attention—but added, that he believed he was mistaken; and this paternal interference, which Walter did not hear of till long afterwards, produced no change in his relations with the object of his growing attachment.

I have neither the power nor the wish to give in detail the sequel of this story. It is sufficient to say, at present, that after he had through several years nourished the dream of an ultimate union with this lady, his hopes terminated in her being married to the late Sir William Forbes, of Pitsligo, Baronet, a gentleman of the highest character, to whom some affectionate allusions occur in one of the greatest of his works, and who lived to act the part of a most generous friend to his early rival throughout the anxieties and distresses of 1826 and 1827. The actual dispersion of the romantic vision and its immediate consequences will be mentioned in due time.

Redgauntlet shadows very distinctly many circumstances connected with the first grand step in the professional history of Alan Fairford. The real *thesis*, however, was on the Title of the Pandects, *Concerning the disposal of the*

dead bodies of Criminals. It was dedicated (I doubt not by the careful father's advice) to his friend and neighbour in George's Square, Macqueen of Braxfield, Lord Justice-Clerk (or President of the Supreme Criminal Court) of Scotland. *Darsie* was present at Alan's "bit chack of dinner," and the old Clerk of the Signet was very joyous on the occasion.

I have often heard both *Alan* and *Darsie* laugh over their reminiscences of the important day when they "put on the gown." After the ceremony was completed, and they had mingled for some time with the crowd of barristers in the Outer Court, Scott said to his comrade, mimicking the air and tone of a Highland lass waiting at the Cross of Edinburgh to be hired for the harvest work—"We've stood here an hour by the Tron, hinny, and de'il a ane has speered our price." Some friendly solicitor, however, gave him a guinea fee before the Court rose; and as they walked down the High Street together, he said to Mr Clerk, in passing a hosier's shop—"This is a sort of a wedding-day, Willie; I think I must go in and buy me a new night-cap." He did so accordingly; but his first fee of any consequence was expended on a silver taper-stand for his mother, which the old lady used to point to with great satisfaction, as it stood on her chimney-piece five-and-twenty years afterwards.

The friends had assumed the gown only the day before the Court of Session rose for the autumn vacation, and Scott appears to have escaped immediately afterwards to the familiar scenery of Kelso, where his kind uncle Robert, the retired East Indian Captain, had acquired the pretty villa of Rosebank, overhanging the Tweed. He had on a former occasion made an excursion into Northumberland as far as Flodden, and given, in a letter to Mr Clerk, the results of a close inspection of that famous battle-field. He now induced his uncle to accompany him in another

Northumbrian expedition, which extended to Hexham, where the grand Saxon Cathedral was duly studied. An epistle to Clerk (Sept. 13) gives this picture of his existence after returning from that trip :—" I am lounging about the country here, to speak sincerely, as idle as the day is long. Two old companions of mine, brothers of Mr Walker of Wooden, having come to this country, we have renewed a great intimacy. As they live directly upon the opposite bank of the river, we have signals agreed upon by which we concert a plan of operations for the day. They are both officers, and very intelligent young fellows, and what is of some consequence, have a brace of fine greyhounds. Yesterday forenoon we killed seven hares, so you see how plenty the game is with us. I have turned a keen duck-shooter, though my success is not very great; and when wading through the mosses upon this errand, accoutred with the long gun, a jacket, musquito trousers, and a rough cap, I might well pass for one of my redoubted moss-trooper progenitors, Walter Fire-the-Braes, or rather Willie wi' the Bolt-foot. For about-doors' amusement, I have constructed a seat in a large tree, which spreads its branches horizontally over the Tweed. This is a favourite situation of mine for reading, especially in a day like this, when the west wind rocks the branches on which I am perched, and the river rolls its waves below me of a turbid blood colour. I have, moreover, cut an embrasure, through which I can fire upon the gulls, herons, and cormorants, as they fly screaming past my nest. To crown the whole, I have carved an inscription upon it in the ancient Roman taste."

It was, however, within a few days after Scott's return from his excursion to Hexham, that he made another expedition of more importance to the history of his life. While attending the Michaelmas head-court at Jedburgh, he was introduced to Mr Robert Shortreed, who spent the greater part of his life in the enjoyment of much respect as

Sheriff-substitute of Roxburghshire. Scott expressed his wish to visit the then wild and inaccessible district of Liddesdale, particularly with a view to examine the ruins of the famous castle of Hermitage, and to pick up some of the ancient *riding ballads*, said to be still preserved among the descendants of the moss-troopers who had followed the banner of the Douglasses, when lords of that grim and remote fastness; and his new acquaintance offered to be his guide.

During seven successive years he made a *raid*, as he called it, into Liddesdale, in company with Mr Shortreed; exploring every rivulet to its source, and every ruined *peel* from foundation to battlement. At this time no wheeled carriage had ever been seen in the district—the first, indeed, that ever appeared there was a gig, driven by Scott himself for a part of his way, when on the last of these seven excursions. There was no inn nor public-house of any kind in the whole valley; the travellers passed from the shepherd's hut to the minister's manse, and again from the cheerful hospitality of the manse to the rough and jolly welcome of the homestead; gathering, wherever they went, songs and tunes, and occasionally more tangible relics of antiquity—even such "a rowth of auld nicknackets" as Burns ascribes to Captain Grose. To these rambles Scott owed much of the materials of his "Minstrelsy of the Border;" and not less of that intimate acquaintance with the living manners of these unsophisticated regions, which constitutes the chief charm of one of the most charming of his prose works. But how soon he had any definite object before him in his researches, seems very doubtful. "He was *makin' himsell* a' the time," said Mr Shortreed; "but he didna ken maybe what he was about till years had passed: At first he thought o' little, I dare say, but the queerness and the fun."

"In those days," says the Memorandum before me, "advocates were not so plenty—at least about Liddes-

dale;"[1] and the worthy Sheriff-substitute goes on to describe the sort of bustle, not unmixed with alarm, produced at the first farm-house they visited (Willie Elliot's at Millburnholm), when the honest man was informed of the quality of one of his guests. When they dismounted, accordingly, he received the stranger with great ceremony, and insisted upon himself leading his horse to the stable. Shortreed accompanied Willie, however, and the latter, after taking a deliberate peep at Scott, "out by the edge of the door-cheek," whispered, "Weel, Robin, I say, de'il hae me if I's be a bit feared for him now; he's just a chield like ourselves, I think." Half-a-dozen dogs of all degrees had already gathered round "the advocate," and his way of returning their compliments had set Willie at his ease.

According to Mr Shortreed, this good-man of Milburnholm was the great original of Dandie Dinmont. As he seems to have been the first of these upland sheep-farmers that Scott ever knew, there can be little doubt that he sat for some parts of that inimitable portraiture; and it is certain that the James Davidson, who carried the name of Dandie to his grave with him, and whose thoroughbred deathbed scene is told in the Notes to Guy Mannering, was first pointed out to Scott by Mr Shortreed himself, several years after the novel had established the man's celebrity all over the Border; some accidental report about his terriers, and their odd names, having alone been turned to account in the tale. But I have the best reason to believe that the kind and manly character of Dandie, the gentle and

[1] I am obliged to Mr John Elliot Shortreed, for some *memoranda* of his father's conversations on this subject. I had, however, many opportunities of hearing Mr Shortreed's stories from his own lips, having often been under his hospitable roof in company with Sir Walter, who, to the last, was his old friend's guest whenever business took him to Jedburgh.

delicious one of his wife, and some at least of the most picturesque peculiarities of the *menage* at Charlieshope, were filled up from Scott's observation, years after this period, of a family, with one of whose members he had, through the best part of his life, a close and affectionate connexion. To those who were familiar with him, I have perhaps already sufficiently indicated the early home of his dear friend William Laidlaw, among "the braes of Yarrow."

They dined at Millburnholm, and after having lingered over Willie Elliot's punch-bowl, until, in Mr Shortreed's phrase, they were "half glowrin," mounted their steeds again, and proceeded to Dr Elliot's at Cleughhead, where ("for," says my Memorandum, "folk were na very nice in those days") the two travellers slept in one bed—as, indeed, seems to have been the case throughout most of their excursions in this district. Dr Elliot had already a MS. collection of ballads; but he now exerted himself, for several years, with redoubled diligence, in seeking out the living depositaries of such lore among the darker recesses of the mountains. "The Doctor," says Mr Shortreed, "would have gane through fire and water for Sir Walter, when he ance kenned him."

Next morning they seem to have ridden a long way, for the express purpose of visiting one "auld Thomas o'-Twizzlehope,"—another Elliot, I suppose, who was celebrated for his skill on the Border pipe, and in particular for being in possession of the real *lilt* of *Dick o' the Cow*. Before starting, that is, at six o'clock, the ballad-hunters had, "just to lay the stomach, a devilled duck or twae, and some *London* porter." Auld Thomas found them, nevertheless, well disposed for "breakfast" on their arrival at Twizzlehope; and this being over, he delighted them with one of the most hideous and unearthly of all the specimens of "riding music," and, moreover, with considerable libations of whisky-punch, manufactured in a certain wooden vessel, resembling a very small milk-

pail, which he called Wisdom, because it "made" only a few spoonfuls of spirits—though he had the art of replenishing it so adroitly, that it had been celebrated for fifty years as more fatal to sobriety than any bowl in the parish. Having done due honour to Wisdom, they again mounted, and proceeded over moss and moor to some other equally hospitable master of the pipe. "Eh me!" says Shortreed, "sic an endless fund o' humour and drollery as he then had wi' him! Never ten yards but we were either laughing or roaring and singing. Wherever we stopped, how brawlie he suited himsel' to everybody! He ay did as the lave did; never made himsel' the great man, or took ony airs in the company. I've seen him in a' moods in these jaunts, grave and gay, daft and serious, sober and drunk—(this, however, even in our wildest rambles, was but rare)—but, drunk or sober, he was ay the gentleman. He looked excessively heavy and stupid when he was *fou*, but he was never out o' gude-humour."

On reaching, one evening, some *Charlieshope* or other (I forget the name) among those wildernesses, they found a kindly reception as usual; but to their agreeable surprise, after some days of hard living, a measured and orderly hospitality as respected liquor. Soon after supper, at which a bottle of elderberry wine alone had been produced, a young student of divinity, who happened to be in the house, was called upon to take the "big ha' Bible," in the good old fashion of Burns's Saturday Night; and some progress had been already made in the service, when the goodman of the farm, whose "tendency was soporific," scandalized his wife and the dominie by starting suddenly from his knees, and rubbing his eyes, with a stentorian exclamation of "By ——, here's the keg at last!" and in tumbled, as he spake the word, a couple of sturdy herdsmen, whom, on hearing a day before of the advocate's approaching visit, he had dispatched to a certain smuggler's haunt, at some considerable distance, in quest of a supply

of *run* brandy from the Solway Frith. The pious "exercise" of the household was hopelessly interrupted. With a thousand apologies for his hitherto shabby entertainment, this jolly Elliot, or Armstrong, had the welcome *keg* mounted on the table without a moment's delay,—and gentle and simple, not forgetting the dominie, continued carousing about it until daylight streamed in upon the party. Sir Walter Scott seldom failed, when I saw him in company with his Liddesdale companion, to mimic the sudden outburst of his old host, on hearing the clatter of horses' feet, which he knew to indicate the arrival of the keg—the consternation of the dame —and the rueful despair with which the young clergyman closed the book.

"It was in that same season, I think," says Mr Shortreed, "that Sir Walter got from Dr Elliot the large old border war-horn, which ye may still see hanging in the armoury at Abbotsford. How *great* he was when he was made master o' *that!* I believe it had been found in Hermitage Castle—and one of the Doctor's servants had used it many a day as a grease-horn for his scythe, before they discovered its history. When cleaned out, it was never a hair the worse—the original chain, hoop, and mouth-piece of steel, were all entire, just as you now see them. Sir Walter carried it home all the way from Liddesdale to Jedburgh, slung about his neck like Johnny Gilpin's bottle, while I was intrusted with an ancient bridle-bit, which we had likewise picked up.

> 'The feint o' pride—na pride had he . . .
> A lang kail-gully hung down by his side,
> And a great meikle nowt-horn to rout on had he,'

and meikle and sair we routed on't, and 'hotched and blew, wi' micht and main.' O what pleasant days! And then a' the nonsense we had cost us naething. We never put hand in pocket for a week on end. Toll-bars there were nane—and indeed I think our haill charges were a

feed o' corn to our horses in the gangin' and comin' at Riccartoun mill."

It is a pity that we have no letters of Scott's describing this first *raid* into Liddesdale; but as he must have left Kelso for Edinburgh very soon after its conclusion, he probably chose to be the bearer of his own tidings.

I have found, however, two note-books, inscribed "Walter Scott, 1792," containing a variety of scraps and hints which may help us to fill up our notion of his private studies during that year. We have here a most miscellaneous collection, in which there is whatever might have been looked for, with perhaps the single exception of original verse. One of the books opens with "*Vegtam's Kvitha*, or The Descent of Odin, with the Latin of Thomas Bartholine, and the English poetical version of Mr Gray; with some account of the death of Balder, both as narrated in the Edda, and as handed down to us by the northern historians—*Auctore Gualtero Scott.*" The Norse original, and the two versions, are then transcribed; and the historical account appended, extending to seven closely written quarto pages, was, I doubt not, read before one or other of his debating societies. Next comes a page, headed "Pecuniary Distress of Charles the First," and containing a transcript of a receipt for some plate lent to the King in 1643. He then copies Langhorne's Owen of Carron; the verses of Canute, on passing Ely; the lines to a cuckoo, given by Warton as the oldest specimen of English verse; a translation, "by a gentleman in Devonshire," of the death-song of Regner Lodbrog; and the beautiful quatrain omitted in Gray's elegy,—

"There scattered oft, the earliest of the year," &c.

After this we have an Italian canzonet on the praises of blue eyes (which were much in favour at this time;) several pages of etymologies from Ducange; some more of notes on the Morte Arthur; extracts from the Books of Adjournal

about Dame Janet Beaton, the Lady of Branxome of the Lay of the Last Minstrel, and her husband "Sir Walter Scott of Buccleuch, called *Wicked Watt;*" other extracts about witches and fairies; various couplets from Hall's Satires; a passage from *Albania;* notes on the Second Sight, with extracts from Aubrey and Glanville; a "List of Ballads to be discovered or recovered;" extracts from *Guerin de Montglave;* and after many more similar entries, a table of the Mæso-Gothic, Anglo-Saxon and Runic alphabets;—with a fourth section, headed *German*, but left blank.

In November 1792, Scott and Clerk began their regular attendance at the Parliament House, and Scott, to use Mr Clerk's words, "by and by crept into a tolerable share of such business as may be expected from a writer's connexion." By this we are to understand that he was employed from time to time by his father, and probably a few other solicitors, in that dreary every-day taskwork, chiefly of long written *informations*, and other papers for the Court, on which young counsellors of the Scotch Bar were then expected to bestow a great deal of trouble for very scanty pecuniary remuneration, and with scarcely a chance of finding reserved for their hands any matter that could elicit the display of superior knowledge or understanding. He had also his part in the cases of persons suing *in forma pauperis;* but how little important those that came to his share were, and how slender was the impression they had left on his mind, we may gather from a note on Redgauntlet, wherein he signifies his doubts whether he really had ever been engaged in what he has certainly made the *cause célèbre* of *Poor Peter Peebles.*

But he soon became as famous for his powers of story-telling among the lawyers of the Outer-House, as he had been among the companions of his High-School days. The place where these idlers mostly congregated was called, it seems, by a name which sufficiently marks the date—it was *the Mountain.* Here, as Roger North says of the Court of

King's Bench in his early day, "there was more news than law;"—here hour after hour passed away, month after month, and year after year, in the interchange of light-hearted merriment among a circle of young men, more than one of whom, in after times, attained the highest honours of the profession. Among the most intimate of Scott's daily associates from this time, and during all his subsequent attendance at the Bar, were, besides various since eminent persons that have been already named, the first legal antiquary of our time in Scotland, Mr Thomas Thomson, and William Erskine, afterwards Lord Kinedder. Mr Clerk remembers complaining one morning on finding the group convulsed with laughter, that *Duns Scotus* had been forestalling him in a good story, which he had communicated privately the day before—adding, moreover, that his friend had not only stolen, but disguised it. "Why," answered he, skilfully waving the main charge, "this is always the way with *the Baronet.*[1] He is continually saying that I change his stories, whereas in fact I only put a cocked hat on their heads, and stick a cane into their hands—to make them fit for going into company."

Some interest had been excited in Edinburgh as to the rising literature of Germany, by an essay of Mackenzie's in 1778, and a subsequent version of *The Robbers*, by Mr Tytler (Lord Woodhouselee). About Christmas 1792, a German class was formed under a Dr Willick, which included Scott, Clerk, Thomson, and Erskine; all of whom soon qualified themselves to taste the beauties of Schiller and Goethe in the original. This class contributed greatly to Scott's familiarity with Erskine; a familiarity which grew into one of the warmest and closest of his friendships. All the others above named, except Erskine, were by descent and

[1] *Duns Scotus* was an old college-club nickname for Walter Scott, a tribute to his love of antiquities. Clerk was with the same set *the Baronet*, as belonging to the family of the Baronets of Pennycuick.

connection Whigs; and though politics never shook the affection of any of these early companions, the events and controversies of the immediately ensuing years could not but disturb, more or less, the social habits of young barristers who adopted opposite views on the French Revolution and the policy of Pitt. On such subjects Erskine entirely sympathized with Scott; and though in many respects, indeed in strength of mind and character, and in the general turn of opinion and manners, others of his contemporaries must always have seemed far more likely to suit Walter Scott, Erskine became, and continued during the brightest part of his life to be, the nearest and most confidential of all his Edinburgh associates. Nor can it be doubted that he exercised, at the active period we have now reached, a very important influence on his friend's literary tastes, and especially on his German studies. William Erskine was the son of an Episcopalian clergyman in Perthshire, of a good family, but far from wealthy. He had received his early education at Glasgow, where he was boarded under the roof of Andrew Macdonald, the author of Vimonda, who then officiated as minister to a small congregation of Episcopalian nonconformists. From this unfortunate but very ingenious man, Erskine had derived, in boyhood, a strong passion for old English literature, more especially the Elizabethan dramatists; which, however, he combined with a far livelier relish for the classics of antiquity than either Scott or his master ever possessed. From the beginning, accordingly, Scott had in Erskine a monitor who, entering most warmly into his taste for national lore—the life of the past—and the bold and picturesque style of the original English school—was constantly urging the advantages to be derived from combining with its varied and masculine breadth of delineation such attention to the minor graces of arrangement and diction as might conciliate the fastidiousness of modern taste.

Directed, as Scott mainly was in the ultimate determination of his literary ambition, by the example of the great founders of the German drama and romance, he appears to have run at first no trivial hazard of adopting the extravagances, both of thought and language, which he found blended in their works with such a captivating display of genius, and genius employed on subjects so much in unison with the deepest of his own juvenile predilections. His friendly critic was just as well as delicate; and severity as to the mingled absurdities and vulgarities of German detail, commanded deliberate attention from one who admired not less enthusiastically than himself the sublimity and pathos of his new favourites.

In March, 1793, when the Court rose, he proceeded into Galloway, in order to make himself acquainted with the case of a certain Rev. Mr M'Naught, minister of Girthon, whose trial, on charges of habitual drunkenness, singing of lewd and profane songs, dancing and toying at a penny-wedding with a "sweetie wife" (that is, an itinerant vender of gingerbread, &c.), and, moreover, of promoting irregular marriages as a justice of the peace, was about to take place before the General Assembly of the Kirk.

The "case of M'Naught" (fee five guineas) is the earliest of Scott's legal papers that has been discovered; and it is perhaps as plausible a statement as the circumstances could bear. In May he was called on to support it at the bar of the Assembly; and he did so in a speech of considerable length. This was by far the most important business in which any solicitor had as yet employed him, and *The Mountain* mustered strong in the gallery. He began in a low voice, but by degrees gathered more confidence; and when it became necessary for him to analyse the evidence touching the penny-wedding, repeated some coarse specimens of his client's alleged conversation, in a tone so bold and free, that he was called to order

with great austerity by one of the leading members of the Venerable Court. This seemed to confuse him not a little; so when, by and by, he had to recite a stanza of one of M'Naught's convivial ditties, he breathed it out in a faint and hesitating style: whereupon, thinking he needed encouragement, the allies in the gallery astounded the Assembly by cordial shouts of *hear! hear!—encore! encore!* They were immediately turned out, and Scott got through the rest of his harangue very little to his own satisfaction.

He believed, in a word, that he had made a complete failure, and issued from the Court in a melancholy mood. At the door he found Adam Fergusson waiting to inform him that the brethren so unceremoniously extruded from the gallery had sought shelter in a neighbouring tavern, where they hoped he would join them. He complied with the invitation, but seemed for a long while incapable of enjoying the merriment of his friends. "Come, *Duns*," cried *the Baronet*;—"cheer up, man, and fill another tumbler; here 's * * * * * going to give us *The Tailor*."—"Ah!" he answered with a groan—"the tailor was a better man than me, sirs; for he didna venture *ben* until he *kenned the way*." A certain comical old song, which had, perhaps, been a favourite with the minister of Girthon—

> "The tailor he came here to sew,
> And weel he kenn'd the way o't," &c.

was, however, sung and chorussed; and the evening ended in *High Jinks*.

Mr M'Naught was deposed from the ministry. It is to be observed, that the research made with a view to pleading this cause, carried Scott for the first, and I believe for the last time, into the scenery of his Guy Mannering; and several of the names of the minor characters of the novel (*M'Guffog*, for example) appear in the list of witnesses.

If the preceding autumn forms a remarkable point in his history, as first introducing him to the manners of

the wilder Border country, the summer which followed left traces of equal importance. He then visited some of the finest districts of Stirlingshire and Perthshire; and not in the percursory manner of his more boyish expeditions but taking up his residence for a week or ten days in succession at the family residences of several of his young allies of *The Mountain*, and from thence familiarizing himself at leisure with the country and the people round about. In this way he lingered some time at Tullibody, the seat of the father of Sir Ralph Abercromby, and grandfather of his friend George Abercromby; and heard from the old gentleman's own lips the narrative of a journey which he had been obliged to make to the retreat of Rob Roy. The venerable laird told how he was received by the cateran "with much courtesy," in a cavern exactly such as that of *Bean Lean;* dined on collops cut from some of his own cattle, which he recognised hanging by their heels from the rocky roof beyond; and returned in all safety, after concluding a bargain of *black-mail*—in virtue of which annual payment, Rob Roy guaranteed the future security of his herds against, not his own followers merely, but all freebooters whatever. Scott next visited his friend Edmonstone, at Newton, a beautiful seat close to the ruins of the once magnificent Castle of Doune, and heard another aged gentleman's vivid recollections of all that happened there when John Home, the author of Douglas, and other Hanoverian prisoners, escaped from the Highland garrison in 1745. Proceeding towards the sources of the Teith, he was received for the first time under a roof which, in subsequent years, he regularly revisited, that of another of his associates, Buchanan, the young Laird of Cambusmore. It was thus that the scenery of Loch Katrine came to be so associated with "the recollection of many a dear friend and merry expedition of former days," that to compose the

Lady of the Lake was "a labour of love, and no less so to recall the manners and incidents introduced."[1] It was starting from the same house, when the poem itself had made some progress, that he put to the test the practicability of riding from the banks of Loch Vennachar to the Castle of Stirling within the brief space which he had assigned to Fitz-James's Grey Bayard, after the duel with Roderick Dhu; and the principal land-marks in the description of that fiery progress are so many hospitable mansions, all familiar to him at the same period:—Blairdrummond, the residence of Lord Kaimes; Ochtertyre, that of John Ramsay, the scholar and antiquary (now best remembered for his kind and sagacious advice to Burns;) and "the lofty brow of ancient Kier," the fine seat of the chief family of the name of Stirling; from which, to say nothing of remoter objects, the prospect has on one hand the rock of "Snowdon," and in front the field of Bannockburn.

Another resting place was Craighall, in Perthshire, the seat of the Rattrays, a family related to Mr Clerk, who accompanied him. From the position of this striking place, as Mr Clerk at once perceived, and as the author afterwards confessed to him, that of *Tully-Veolan* was faithfully copied; though in the description of the house itself, and its gardens, many features were adopted from Bruntsfield and Ravelstone. Mr Clerk told me that he went through the first chapters of Waverley without more than a vague suspicion of the new novelist; but that when he read the arrival at Tully-Veolan, his suspicion was converted into certainty, and he handed the book to a common friend of his and the author's, saying, "This is Scott's—and I'll lay a bet you'll find such and such things in the next chapter." I hope to be forgiven for mentioning *the* circumstance that flashed conviction. In the course

[1] Introduction to *The Lady*.

of a ride from Craighall, they had both become considerably fagged and heated, and Clerk, seeing the smoke of a *clachan* a little way before them, ejaculated—"How agreeable if we should here fall in with one of those signposts where a red lion predominates over a punch-bowl!" The phrase happened to tickle Scott's fancy—he often introduced it on similar occasions afterwards—and at the distance of twenty years Mr Clerk was at no loss to recognise an old acquaintance in the "huge bear" which "predominates" over the stone basin in the courtyard of Baron Bradwardine.

I believe the longest stay was at Meigle in Forfarshire, the seat of Patrick Murray of Simprim, whose passion for antiquities, especially military antiquities, had peculiarly endeared him both to Scott and Clerk. Here Adam Fergusson, too, was of the party; and I have often heard them each and all dwell on the thousand scenes of adventure and merriment which diversified that visit. In the village churchyard, close beneath Mr Murray's gardens, tradition still points out the tomb of Queen Guenever; and the whole district abounds in objects of historical interest. Amidst them they spent their wandering days, while their evenings passed in the joyous festivity of a wealthy young bachelor's establishment, or sometimes under the roofs of neighbours less refined than their host, the *Balmawhapples* of the Braes of Angus. From Meigle they made a trip to Dunottar Castle, the ruins of the huge old fortress of the Earls Marischall, and it was in the churchyard of that place that Scott then saw for the first and last time Peter Paterson, the living *Old Mortality*. He and Mr Walker, the minister of the parish, found the poor man refreshing the epitaphs on the tombs of certain Cameronians who had fallen under the oppressions of James the Second's brief insanity. Being invited into the manse after dinner to take a glass of whisky punch, "to which he was supposed to have no objections," he joined the minister's party ac-

cordingly; but "he was in bad humour," says Scott, "and, to use his own phrase, had no freedom for conversation. His spirit had been sorely vexed by hearing, in a certain Aberdonian kirk, the psalmody directed by a pitch-pipe or some similar instrument, which was to Old Mortality the abomination of abominations."

It was also while he had his headquarters at Meigle at this time, that Scott visited for the first time *Glammis*, the residence of the Earls of Strathmore, by far the noblest specimen of the real feudal castle, entire and perfect, that had as yet come under his inspection. What its aspect was when he first saw it, and how grievously he lamented the change it had undergone when he revisited it some years afterwards, he has recorded in one of the most striking passages of his *Essay on Landscape Gardening*.

The night he spent at the yet unprofaned Glammis in 1793 was, as he tells us in his *Demonology*, one of the "*two* periods distant from each other" at which he could recollect experiencing "that degree of superstitious awe which his countrymen call *eerie*." "After a *very hospitable* reception from the late Peter Proctor, seneschal of the castle, I was conducted," he says, "to my apartment in a distant part of the building. I must own, that when I heard door after door shut, after my conductor had retired, I began to consider myself as too far from the living, and somewhat too near the dead," &c. But one of his notes on Waverley touches a certain not unimportant part of the story more distinctly; for we are there informed, that the *silver bear* of Tully-Veolan, "the *poculum potatorium* of the valiant baron," had its prototype at Glammis—a massive beaker of silver, double gilt, moulded into the form of a *lion*, the name and bearing of the Earls of Strathmore, and containing about an English pint of wine. "The author," he says, "ought perhaps to be ashamed of recording that he had the honour of swallowing the contents of *the lion;* and the recollection of the feat suggested the story of the Bear of Bradwardine."

From this pleasant tour, so rich in its results, he returned in time to attend the autumnal assizes at Jedburgh, on which occasion he made his first appearance as counsel in a criminal court; and had the satisfaction of helping a veteran poacher and sheep-stealer to escape through some of the meshes of the law. "You're a lucky scoundrel," Scott whispered to his client, when the verdict was pronounced.—"I'm just o' your mind," quoth the desperado, "and I'll send ye a maukin [viz. a hare] the morn, man." I am not sure whether it was at these assizes or the next in the same town, that he had less success in the case of a certain notorious housebreaker. The man, however, was well aware that no skill could have baffled the clear evidence against him, and was, after his fashion, grateful for such exertions as had been made in his behalf. He requested the young advocate to visit him once more before he left the place. Scott's curiosity induced him to accept this invitation, and his friend, as soon as they were alone together in the *condemned cell*, said—"I am very sorry, sir, that I have no fee to offer you—so let me beg your acceptance of two bits of advice which may be useful perhaps when you come to have a house of your own. I am done with practice, you see, and here is my legacy. Never keep a large watchdog out of doors—we can always silence them cheaply—indeed if it be a *dog*, 'tis easier than whistling—but tie a little tight yelping terrier within; and secondly, put no trust in nice, clever, gimcrack locks—the only thing that bothers us is a huge old heavy one, no matter how simple the construction,—and the ruder and rustier the key, so much the better for the housekeeper." I remember hearing him tell this story some thirty years after at a Judges' dinner at Jedburgh, and he summed it up with a rhyme—"Ay, ay, my lord," (he addressed his friend Lord Meadowbank)—

> "'Yelping terrier, rusty key,
> Was Walter Scott's best Jeddart fee.'"

The winter of 1793-4 appears to have been passed like

the preceding one: the German class resumed their sittings; Scott spoke in his debating club on the questions of Parliamentary Reform and the Inviolability of the Person of the First Magistrate; his love-affair continued on the same footing as before;—and for the rest, like the young heroes in Redgauntlet, he "swept the boards of the Parliament House with the skirts of his gown; laughed, and made others laugh; drank claret at Bayle's, Fortune's, and Walker's, and ate oysters in the Covenant Close." On his desk "the new novel most in repute lay snugly intrenched beneath Stair's Institute, or an open volume of Decisions;" and his dressing-table was littered with "old play-bills, letters respecting a meeting of the Faculty, Rules of the Speculative, Syllabus of Lectures—all the miscellaneous contents of a young advocate's pocket, which contains everything but briefs and bank-notes." His professional occupation was still very slender; but he took a lively interest in the proceedings of the criminal court, and more especially in those arising out of the troubled state of the public feeling as to politics.

In the spring of 1794 I find him writing to his friends in Roxburghshire with great exultation about the "good spirit" manifesting itself among the upper classes of the citizens of Edinburgh, and above all, the organization of a regiment of volunteers, in which his brother Thomas was enrolled as a grenadier, while, as he remarks, his own "unfortunate infirmity" condemned him to be "a mere spectator of the drills." In the course of the same year, the plan of a corps of volunteer light horse was started; and if the recollection of Mr Skene be accurate, the suggestion originally proceeded from Scott himself, who certainly had a principal share in its subsequent success. He writes to his uncle at Rosebank, requesting him to be on the look-out for a "strong gelding, such as would suit a stalwart dragoon;" and intimating his intention to part with his collection of Scottish coins, rather than not be mounted to his mind. The corps, however, was not orga-

nized for some time; and in the meanwhile he had an opportunity of displaying his zeal in a manner which Captain Scott by no means considered as so respectable.

A party of Irish medical students began, towards the end of April, to make themselves remarkable in the Edinburgh Theatre, where they mustered in a particular corner of the pit, and lost no opportunity of insulting the loyalists of the boxes, by calling for revolutionary tunes, applauding every speech that could bear a seditious meaning, and drowning the national anthem in howls and hootings. The young Tories of the Parliament House resented this licence warmly, and after a succession of minor disturbances, the quarrel was put to the issue of a regular trial by combat. Scott was conspicuous among the juvenile advocates and solicitors who on this grand night assembled in front of the pit, armed with stout cudgels, and determined to have *God save the King* not only played without interruption, but sung in full chorus by both company and audience. The Irishmen were ready at the first note of the anthem. They rose, clapped on their hats, and brandished their shillelahs; a stern battle ensued, and after many a head had been cracked, the lawyers at length found themselves in possession of the field. In writing to Simprim a few days afterwards, Scott says—"You will be glad to hear that the *affair* of Saturday passed over without any worse consequence to the Loyalists than that five, including your friend and humble servant *Colonel Grogg*,[1] have been bound over to the peace, and obliged to give bail for their good behaviour, which, you may believe, was easily found. The said Colonel had no less than three broken heads laid to his charge by as many of the Democrats." Sir Alexander Wood, says—"Walter was certainly our Coryphæus, and signalized himself splendidly in this desperate fray." After this exhibition of zeal, it will not per-

[1] This was Scott's nickname in a boyish club: derived, it is said, from a remarkable pair of Grogram breeches—but another etymon might have its claim.

haps surprise the reader of Scott's letters, to find him returning to Edinburgh from a remote ramble in the Highlands during the next autumn, on purpose to witness the execution of Watt, who had been tried and condemned for his share in a plot for seizing the Castle, and proclaiming a provisional republican government. He expresses great contempt for the unhappy man's pusillanimous behaviour in his last scene; and soon after, on occasion of another formidable riot, he appears as active among the special constables sworn in by the magistracy.

His rambles continued to give his father considerable vexation. Some sentences in a letter to his aunt, Miss Christian Rutherford, may be worth quoting for certain allusions to this and other domestic matters. Mr Scott, though on particular occasions he could permit himself, like Saunders Fairford, to play the part of a good Amphytrion, was habitually ascetic in his habits. I have heard his son tell, that it was common with him, if any one observed that the soup was good, to taste it again, and say,—"Yes, it is too good, bairns," and dash a tumbler of cold water into his plate. It is easy, therefore, to imagine with what rigidity he must have enforced the ultra-Catholic severities which marked, in those days, the yearly or half-yearly *retreat* of the descendants of John Knox. Walter writes:—"I want the assistance of your eloquence to convince my honoured father that nature did not mean me either for a vagabond or *travelling merchant*, when she honoured me with the wandering propensity lately so conspicuously displayed. I saw Dr. R. yesterday, who is well. I did not choose to intrude upon the little lady, this being sermon week; for the same reason we are looking very religious and very sour at home. However, it is with *some folk* selon les régles, that in proportion as they are pure themselves, they are entitled to render uncomfortable those whom they consider as less perfect."

If his father had some reason to complain of want of ardour as to the weightier matters of the law, it probably

gave him little consolation to hear, in June 1795, of his appointment to be one of the curators of the Advocates' Library, an office always reserved for those members of the Faculty who have the reputation of superior zeal in literary affairs. He had for colleagues David Hume, the Professor of Scots Law, and Malcolm Laing, the historian; and his discharge of his functions must have given satisfaction, for I find him further nominated, in March 1796, together with Mr Robert Cay,—an accomplished gentleman, afterwards Judge of the Admiralty Court in Scotland—to "put the Faculty's cabinet of medals in proper arrangement." From the first assumption of the gown, he had been accustomed to spend many of his hours in the low gloomy vaults under the Parliament House, which then formed the only receptacle for their literary and antiquarian collections. This habit, it may be supposed, grew by what it fed on. MSS. can only be consulted within the library, and his highland and border raids were constantly suggesting inquiries as to ancient local history and legends, which could nowhere else have been pursued with equal advantage. He became an adept in the deciphering of old deeds; and whoever examines the rich treasure of the MacFarlan MSS., and others serviceable for the illustration of Scotch topography and genealogy, will, I am told, soon become familiar with the marks of his early pencil. His reputation for skill in such researches reached George Chalmers, the celebrated antiquary, then engaged in the preparation of his *Caledonia*. They met at Jedburgh, and a correspondence ensued which proved very useful to the veteran author. The border ballads, as they were gradually collected, and numberless quotations from MSS. in illustration of them, were eagerly placed at his disposal.

It must, I think, have been while he was indulging his *vagabond* vein, during the autumn of 1795, that Mrs Barbauld paid her visit to Edinburgh, and entertained a party at Mr Dugald Stewart's, by reading William Taylor's then unpublished version of Bürger's Lenore. In

the essay on Imitation of Popular Poetry, the reader has a full account of the interest with which Scott heard, some weeks afterwards, a friend's imperfect recollections of this performance; the anxiety with which he sought after a copy of the original German; the delight with which he at length perused it; and how, having just been reading the specimens of ballad poetry introduced into Lewis' Romance of The Monk, he called to mind the early facility of versification which had lain so long in abeyance, and ventured to promise his friend a rhymed translation of Lenore from his own pen. The friend in question was Miss Cranstoun, afterwards Countess of Purgstall, the sister of George Cranstoun (Lord Corehouse.) He began the task, he tells us, after supper, and did not retire to bed until he had finished it, having by that time worked himself into a state of excitement which set sleep at defiance.

Next morning, before breakfast, he carried his MS. to Miss Cranstoun, who was not only delighted but astonished at it; for I have seen a letter of hers to a friend in the country, in which she says—"Upon my word, Walter Scott is going to turn out a poet—something of a cross I think between Burns and Gray." The same day he read it also to Sir Alexander Wood, who retains a vivid recollection of the high strain of enthusiasm into which he had been exalted by dwelling on the wild unearthly imagery of the German bard. "He read it over to me," says Sir Alexander, "in a very slow and solemn tone, and after we had said a few words about its merits, continued to look at the fire silent and musing for some minutes, until he at length burst out with 'I wish to Heaven I could get a skull and two crossbones.'" Wood said, that if Scott would accompany him to the house of John Bell, the celebrated surgeon, he had no doubt this wish might be easily gratified.* They went thither accord-

[1] Sir A. Wood was himself the son of a distinguished surgeon in Edinburgh. He married one of the daughters of Sir W. Forbes of Pitsligo—rose in the diplomatic service—and died in 1846.

ingly on the instant;—Mr Bell smiled on hearing the object of their visit, and pointing to a closet, at the corner of his library, bade Walter enter and choose. From a well furnished-museum of mortality, he selected forthwith what seemed to him the handsomest skull and pair of cross-bones it contained, and wrapping them in his handkerchief, carried the formidable bundle home to George's Square. The trophies were immediately mounted on the top of his little bookcase; and when Wood visited him, after many years of absence from this country, he found them in possession of a similar position in his dressing-room at Abbotsford.

All this occurred in the beginning of April 1796. A few days afterwards Scott went to pay a visit at a country house, where he expected to meet the "lady of his love." Jane Anne Cranstoun was in the secret of his attachment, and knew, that however doubtful might be Miss Stuart's feeling on that subject, she had a high admiration of Scott's abilities, and often corresponded with him on literary matters; so, after he had left Edinburgh, it occurred to her that she might perhaps forward his views in this quarter. by presenting him in the character of a printed author. William Erskine being called in to her councils, a few copies of the ballad were forthwith thrown off in the most elegant style, and one, richly bound and blazoned, followed Scott in the course of a few days to the country. The verses were read and approved of, and Miss Cranstoun at least flattered herself that he had not made his first appearance in types to no purpose.[1]

In autumn he saw again his favourite haunts in Perthshire and Forfarshire,—among others, the residence of Miss Stuart; and that his reception was not adequate to his expectations, may be gathered from some expressions

[1] This story was told by the Countess of Purgstall on her death-bed to Captain Basil Hall. See his *Schloss Hainfeld*, p. 333.

in a letter addressed to him when at Montrose by his confidante, Miss Cranstoun:—"Dear Scott,"—(she says)—"I bless the gods for conducting your poor dear soul safely to Perth. When I consider the wilds, the forests, the lakes, the rocks—and the spirits in which you must have whispered to their startled echoes, it amazeth me how you escaped. Had you but dismissed your little squire and Earwig [a pony], and spent a few days as Orlando would have done, all posterity might have profited by it; but to trot quietly away, without so much as one stanza to Despair—never talk to me of love again—never, never, never! I am dying for your collection of exploits. When will you return? In the meantime, Heaven speed you! Be sober, and hope to the end."

The affair in which Miss Cranstoun took so lively an interest was now approaching its end. It was known, before autumn closed, that the lady of his vows had finally promised her hand to his amiable rival; and, when the fact was announced, some of those who knew Scott the best, appear to have entertained very serious apprehensions as to the effect which the disappointment might have upon his feelings. For example, one of those brothers of *The Mountain* wrote as follows to another of them, on the 12th October 1796:—"Mr Forbes marries Miss Stuart. This is not good news. I always dreaded there was some self-deception on the part of our romantic friend, and I now shudder at the violence of his most irritable and ungovernable mind. Who is it that says, 'Men have died, and worms have eaten them, but not for LOVE?' I hope sincerely it may be verified on this occasion."

Scott had, however, in all likelihood, digested his agony during the solitary ride in the Highlands to which Miss Cranstoun's last letter alludes.

I venture to recall here to the reader's memory the opening of the twelfth chapter of Peveril of the Peak, written twenty-six years after this youthful disappoint-

ment :—"The period at which love is formed for the first time, and felt most strongly, is seldom that at which there is much prospect of its being brought to a happy issue. The state of artificial society opposes many complicated obstructions to early marriages; and the chance is very great that such obstacles prove insurmountable. In fine, there are few men who do not look back in secret to some period of their youth, at which a sincere and early affection was repulsed, or betrayed, or became abortive from opposing circumstances. It is these little passages of secret history which leave a tinge of romance in every bosom, scarce permitting us, even in the most busy or the most advanced period of life, to listen with total indifference to a tale of true love."

Rebelling, as usual, against circumstances, Scott seems to have turned with renewed ardour to his literary pursuits; and in that same October, 1796, he was "prevailed on," as he playfully expresses it, "by the *request of friends*, to indulge his own vanity, by publishing the translation of Lenore, with that of the Wild Huntsman, also from Bürger, in a thin quarto." The little volume, which has no author's name on the title-page, was printed for Manners and Miller of Edinburgh. He had owed his copy of Bürger to a young gentlewoman of high German blood, who in 1795 became the wife of his friend and chief Hugh Scott of Harden. She was daughter of Count Brühl of Martkirchen, long Saxon ambassador at the Court of St James's, by his wife Almeria, Countess-Dowager of Egremont. The young kinsman was introduced to her soon after her arrival at Mertoun, and his attachment to German studies excited her attention and interest. The ballad of the Wild Huntsman appears to have been executed during the month that preceded his first publication; and he was thenceforth engaged in a succession of versions from the dramas of Meier and Iffland, several of which are still extant in his MS., marked 1796 and 1797. These are

all in prose like their originals; but he also versified at the same time some lyrical fragments of Goethe, as, for example, the Morlachian Ballad, "What yonder glimmers so white on the mountain?" and the song from Claudina von Villa Bella. He consulted his friend at Mertoun on all these essays; and I have often heard him say, that among those many "obligations of a distant date which remained impressed on his memory, after a life spent in a constant interchange of friendship and kindness," he counted not as the least the lady's frankness in correcting his Scotticisms, and more especially his Scottish *rhymes*.

His obligations to this lady were indeed various; but I doubt, after all, whether these were the most important. He used to say, that she was the first *woman of real fashion* that *took him* up; that she used the privileges of her sex and station in the truest spirit of kindness; set him right as to a thousand little trifles, which no one else would have ventured to notice; and, in short, did for him what no one but an elegant woman can do for a young man, whose early days have been spent in narrow and provincial circles. "When I first saw Sir Walter," she writes to me, "he was about four or five-and-twenty, but looked much younger. He seemed bashful and awkward; but there were from the first such gleams of superior sense and spirit in his conversation, that I was hardly surprised when, after our acquaintance had ripened a little, I felt myself to be talking with a man of genius. He was most modest about himself, and shewed his little pieces apparently without any consciousness that they could possess any claim on particular attention. Nothing so easy and good-humoured as the way in which he received any hints I might offer, when he seemed to be tampering with the King's English. I remember particularly how he laughed at himself, when I made him take notice that 'the little two dogs,' in some

of his lines, did not please an English ear accustomed to 'the two little dogs.'"

Nor was this the only person at Mertoun who took a lively interest in his pursuits. Harden entered into all the feelings of his beautiful bride on this subject; and his mother, the Lady Diana Scott, daughter of the last Earl of Marchmont, did so no less. She had conversed, in her early days, with the brightest ornaments of the cycle of Queen Anne, and preserved rich stores of anecdote, well calculated to gratify the curiosity and excite the ambition of a young enthusiast in literature. Lady Diana soon appreciated the minstrel of the clan; and, surviving to a remarkable age, she had the satisfaction of seeing him at the height of his eminence—the solitary person who could give the author of Marmion personal reminiscences of Pope.

With these friends, as well as in his Edinburgh circle, the little anonymous volume found warm favour; Dugald Stewart, Ramsay of Ochtertyre, and George Chalmers, especially prophesied for it great success. The many inaccuracies and awkwardness of rhyme and diction to which Scott alludes in republishing its two ballads towards the close of his life, did not prevent real lovers of poetry from seeing that no one but a poet could have transfused the daring imagery of the German in a style so free, bold, masculine, and full of life; but, wearied as all such readers had been with that succession of flimsy, lackadaisical trash which followed the appearance of the Reliques by Bishop Percy, the opening of such a new vein of popular poetry as these verses revealed, would have been enough to produce lenient critics for inferior translations. Many, as we have seen, sent forth copies of the Lenore about the same time; and some of these might be thought better than Scott's in particular passages; but, on the whole, it seems to have been felt and acknowledged

by those best entitled to judge, that he deserved the palm. Meantime, we must not forget that Scotland had lost that very year the great poet Burns,—her glory and her shame. It is at least to be hoped that a general sentiment of self-reproach, as well as of sorrow, had been excited by the premature extinction of such a light; and, at all events, it is agreeable to know that they who had watched his career with the most affectionate concern, were among the first to hail the promise of a more fortunate successor.

The anticipations of these gentlemen, that Scott's versions would attract general attention in the south, were not fulfilled. He himself attributes this to the contemporaneous appearance of so many other translations from Lenore. "I was coldly received," he says, "by strangers, but my reputation began rather to increase among my own friends; and on the whole I was more bent to shew the world that it had neglected something worth notice than to be affronted by its indifference; or rather, to speak candidly, I found pleasure in the literary labours in which I had almost by accident become engaged, and laboured less in the hope of pleasing others, though certainly without despair of doing so, than in pursuit of a new and agreeable amusement to myself."

In his German studies, Scott acquired, about this time, another assistant in Mr Skene of Rubislaw—a gentleman considerably his junior, who had just returned to Scotland from a residence of several years in Saxony. Their fondness for the same literature, with Scott's eagerness to profit by his new acquaintance's superior attainment in it, opened an intercourse which general similarity of tastes, and I venture to add, in many of the most important features of character, soon ripened into the familiarity of a tender friendship—"An intimacy," Mr Skene says, in a paper before me, "of which I shall ever think with so much pride—a friendship so pure and cordial as to have been able to withstand all the vicissitudes

of nearly forty years, without ever having sustained even a casual chill from unkind thought or word." Mr Skene adds—"During the whole progress of his varied life, to that eminent station which he could not but feel he at length held in the estimation, not of his countrymen alone, but of the whole world, I never could perceive the slightest shade of variance from that simplicity of character with which he impressed me on the first hour of our meeting."

Among the common tastes which served to knit these friends together, was their love of horsemanship, in which, as in all other manly exercises, Skene highly excelled; and the fears of a French invasion becoming every day more serious, their thoughts were turned with corresponding zeal to the project of mounted volunteers. "The London Light-horse had set the example," says Mr Skene; "but in truth it was to Scott's ardour that this force in the North owed its origin. Unable, by reason of his lameness, to serve amongst his friends on foot, he had nothing for it but to rouse the spirit of the moss-trooper, with which he readily inspired all who possessed the means of substituting the sabre for the musket." On the 14th February 1797, these friends and many more met and drew up an offer to serve as a body of volunteer cavalry in Scotland; which was accepted by Government. The organization of the corps proceeded rapidly; they extended their offer to serve in any part of the island in case of invasion; and this also being accepted, the whole arrangement was shortly completed; when Charles Maitland of Rankeillor was elected Major-Commandant; William Rae of St Catharine's, Captain; William Forbes of Pitsligo, and James Skene of Rubislaw, Cornets; Walter Scott, Paymaster, Quartermaster, and Secretary. But the treble duties thus devolved on Scott were found to interfere too severely with his other avocations, and Colin Mackenzie of Portmore relieved him from those of paymaster.

"The part of quartermaster," says Mr Skene, "was purposely selected for him, that he might be spared the rough usage of the ranks; but, notwithstanding his infirmity, he had a remarkably firm seat on horseback, and in all situations a fearless one: no fatigue ever seemed too much for him, and his zeal and animation served to sustain the enthusiasm of the whole corps, while his ready 'mot à rire' kept up, in all, a degree of good-humour and relish for the service, without which, the toil and privations of long *daily* drills would not easily have been submitted to by such a body of gentlemen. At every interval of exercise, the order, *sit at ease*, was the signal for the quartermaster to lead the squadron to merriment; every eye was intuitively turned on 'Earl Walter,' as he was familiarly called by his associates of that date, and his ready joke seldom failed to raise the ready laugh. He took his full share in all the labours and duties of the corps, had the highest pride in its progress and proficiency, and was such a trooper himself, as only a very powerful frame of body and the warmest zeal in the cause could have enabled any one to be. But his habitual good-humour was the great charm, and at the daily mess (for we all dined together when in quarters) that reigned supreme." *Earl Walter's* first charger, by the way, was a tall and powerful animal, named *Lenore*. These daily drills appear to have been persisted in during the spring and summer of 1797; the corps spending moreover some weeks in quarters at Musselburgh. The majority of the troop having professional duties to attend to, the ordinary hour for drill was five in the morning; and when we reflect, that after some hours of hard work in this way, Scott had to produce himself regularly in the Parliament House with gown and wig, for the space of four or five hours at least, while his chamber practice, though still humble, was on the increase—and that he had found a plentiful source of new social engagements in his troop connexions—it certainly could have excited no surprise had his literary studies been

found suffering total intermission during this busy period. That such was not the case, however, his correspondence and note-books afford ample evidence. His *fee-book* shews that he made by his first year's practice L.24, 3s.; by the second, L.57, 15s.; by the third, L.84, 4s.; by the fourth, L.90; and in his fifth year at the Bar—that is, from November 1796 to July 1797—L.144, 10s.; of which L.50 were fees from his father's chamber. He had no turn, at this time of his life, for early rising; so that the regular attendance at the morning drills was of itself a strong evidence of his military zeal; but he must have, in spite of them, and of all other circumstances, persisted in what was the usual custom of all his earlier life, namely, the devotion of the best hours of the night to solitary study. In general, both as a young man, and in more advanced age, his constitution required a good allowance of sleep, and he, on principle, indulged in it, saying, "he was but half a man if he had not full seven hours of utter unconsciousness;" but his whole mind and temperament were, at this period, in a state of most fervent exaltation, and spirit triumphed over matter.

CHAPTER III.

Tour to the English Lakes—Miss Carpenter—Marriage—Lasswade Cottage—Original Ballads—Monk Lewis—Goetz of Berlichingen—John Leyden—James Hogg—James Ballantyne—Sheriffship of Selkirk—Publication of the Minstrelsy of the Border. 1797–1803.

After the rising of the Court of Session in July 1797, Scott set out on a tour to the English lakes, accompanied by his brother John and Adam Fergusson. Their first stage was Halyards in Tweeddale, then inhabited by his friend's father, the philosopher and historian; and they stayed there for a day or two, in the course of which he had his first and only interview with David Ritchie, the original of his Black Dwarf. Proceeding southwards, the tourists visited Carlisle, Penrith,—the vale of the Eamont, including Mayburgh and Brougham Castle,—Ulswater and Windermere; and at length fixed their head-quarters at the then peaceful and sequestered little watering place of Gilsland, making excursions from thence to the various scenes of romantic interest which are commemorated in The Bridal of Triermain, and otherwise leading very much the sort of life depicted among the loungers of St Ronan's Well. Scott was, on his first arrival at Gilsland, not a little engaged with the beauty of one of the young ladies lodged under the same roof with him; and it was on occasion of a visit in her company to some part of the Roman Wall that he indited his lines—

> "Take these flowers which, purple waving,
> On the ruin'd rampart grew," &c.

But this was only a passing glimpse of flirtation. A week or so afterwards commenced a more serious affair.

Riding one day with Fergusson, they met, some miles from their quarters, a young lady taking the air on horseback, whom neither of them had previously remarked, and whose appearance instantly struck both so much, that they kept her in view until they had satisfied themselves that she also was one of the party at Gilsland. The same evening there was a ball, at which Captain Scott produced himself in his regimentals, and Fergusson also thought proper to be equipped in the uniform of the Edinburgh Volunteers. There was no little rivalry among the young travellers as to who should first get presented to the unknown beauty of the morning's ride; but though both the gentlemen in scarlet had the advantage of being dancing partners, their friend succeeded in handing the fair stranger to supper—and such was his first introduction to Charlotte Margaret Carpenter.

Without the features of a regular beauty, she was rich in personal attractions; "a form that was fashioned as light as a fay's;" a complexion of the clearest and lightest olive; eyes large, deep-set and dazzling, of the finest Italian brown; and a profusion of silken tresses, black as the raven's wing; her address hovering between the reserve of a pretty young Englishwoman who has not mingled largely in general society, and a certain natural archness and gaiety that suited well with the accompaniment of a French accent. A lovelier vision, as all who remember her in the bloom of her days have assured me, could hardly have been imagined; and from that hour the fate of the young poet was fixed.

She was the daughter of Jean Charpentier, of Lyons, a devoted royalist, who held an office under Government, and Charlotte Volere, his wife. She and her only brother, Charles Charpentier, had been educated in the Protestant religion of their mother; and when their father died, which occurred in the beginning of the Revolution, Madame Charpentier made her escape with her children first to

Paris, and then to England, where they found a warm friend and protector in Arthur, the second Marquis of Downshire, who had, in the course of his travels in France, formed an intimate acquaintance with the family, and, indeed, spent some time under their roof. M. Charpentier had, in his first alarm as to the coming Revolution, invested L.4000 in English securities—part in a mortgage upon Lord Downshire's estates. On the mother's death, which occurred soon after her arrival in London, this nobleman took on himself the character of sole guardian to her children; and Charles Charpentier received in due time, through his interest, an appointment in the service of the East India Company, in which he had by this time risen to the lucrative situation of commercial resident at Salem. His sister was now making a little excursion, under the care of the lady who had superintended her education, Miss Jane Nicholson, a daughter of Dr Nicholson, Dean of Exeter, and grand-daughter of William Nicholson, Bishop of Carlisle, well known as the editor of "The English Historical Library." To some connexions which the learned prelate's family had ever since his time kept up in the diocese of Carlisle, Miss Carpenter owed the direction of her summer tour.

Scott's father was now in a very feeble state of health, which accounts for his first announcement of this affair being made in a letter to his mother; it is undated;—but by this time the young lady had left Gilsland for Carlisle, were she remained until her destiny was settled. He says:—"My dear Mother,—I should very ill deserve the care and affection with which you have ever regarded me, were I to neglect my duty so far as to omit consulting my father and you in the most important step which I can possibly take in life, and upon the success of which my future happiness must depend. It is with pleasure I think that I can avail myself of your advice and instructions in an

affair of so great importance as that which I have at present on my hands. You will probably guess from this preamble, that I am engaged in a matrimonial plan, which is really the case. Though my acquaintance with the young lady has not been of long standing, this circumstance is in some degree counterbalanced by the intimacy in which we have lived, and by the opportunities which that intimacy has afforded me of remarking her conduct and sentiments on many different occasions, some of which were rather of a delicate nature, so that in fact I have seen more of her during the few weeks we have been together, than I could have done after a much longer acquaintance, shackled by the common forms of ordinary life. You will not expect from me a description of her person—for which I refer you to my brother, as also for a fuller account of all the circumstances attending the business than can be comprised in the compass of a letter. Without flying into raptures, for I must assure you that my judgment as well as my affections are consulted upon this occasion—without flying into raptures, then, I may safely assure you, that her temper is sweet and cheerful, her understanding good, and, what I know will give you pleasure, her principles of religion very serious. I have been very explicit with her upon the nature of my expectations, and she thinks she can accommodate herself to the situation which I should wish her to hold in society as my wife, which, you will easily comprehend, I mean should neither be extravagant nor degrading. Her fortune, though partly dependent upon her brother, who is high in office at Madras, is very considerable—at present L.500 a-year. This, however, we must, in some degree, regard as precarious—I mean to the full extent; and indeed, when you know her, you will not be surprised that I regard this circumstance chiefly because it removes those prudential considerations which would otherwise render our union impossible for the present. Betwixt

her income and my own professional exertions, I have little doubt we will be enabled to hold the rank in society which my family and situation entitle me to fill. Write to me very fully upon this important subject—send me your opinion, your advice, and, above all, your blessing."

Scott remained in Cumberland until the Jedburgh assizes recalled him to his legal duties. On arriving in that town, he immediately sent for his friend Shortreed, whose *Memorandum* records that the evening of the 30th September 1797 was one of the most joyous he ever spent. "Scott," he says, "was *sair* beside himself about Miss Carpenter;—we toasted her twenty times over—and sat together, he raving about her, until it was one in the morning." He soon returned to Cumberland; and remained there until various difficulties presented by the prudence and prejudices of family connexions had been overcome. It appears that at one stage of the business he had seriously contemplated leaving the bar of Edinburgh, and establishing himself with his bride (I know not in what capacity) in one of the colonies. He attended the Court of Session as usual in November; and was married at Carlisle during the Christmas recess. I extract the following entries from the fly-leaf of his black-letter bible:—

"*Secundum morem majorum hæc de familiâ Gualteri Scott, Jurisconsulti Edinensis, in librum hunc sacrum manu suâ conscripta sunt.*

"*Gualterus Scott, filius Gualteri Scott et Annæ Rutherford, natus erat apud Edinam* 15*mo die Augusti.* A.D. 1771.

"*Socius Facultatis Juridicæ Edinensis receptus erat* 11*mo die Julii,* A.D. 1792.

"*In ecclesiam Sanctæ Mariæ apud Carlisle, uxorem duxit Margaretam Charlottam Carpenter, filiam quondam Joannis*

Charpentier et Charlottæ Volere, Lugdunensem, 24to die Decembris 1797."[1]

Scott carried his bride to a lodging in George Street, Edinburgh; a house which he had taken, not being quite prepared for her reception. The first fortnight was, I believe, sufficient to convince her husband's family that, however rashly he had formed the connexion, she had the sterling qualities of a wife. Notwithstanding some little leaning to the pomps and vanities of the world, she had made up her mind to find her happiness in better things; and so long as their circumstances continued narrow, no woman could have conformed herself to them with more of good feeling and good sense. I cannot fancy that her manners or ideas could ever have amalgamated very well with those of her husband's parents; but the feeble state of the old gentleman's health prevented her from seeing them constantly; and without any affectation of strict intimacy, they soon were, and always continued to be,

[1] The account in the text of Miss Carpenter's origin has been, I am aware, both spoken and written of as an uncandid one: it had been expected that even in 1837 I would not pass in silence a rumour of early prevalence, which represented her and her brother as children of Lord Downshire by Madame Charpentier. I did not think it necessary to allude to this story while any of Sir Walter's own children were living; and I presume it will be sufficient for me to say now, that neither I, nor, I firmly believe, any one of them, ever heard either from Sir Walter, or from his wife, or from Miss Nicholson (who survived them both) the slightest hint as to the rumour in question. There is not an expression in the preserved correspondence between Scott, the young lady, and the Marquis, that gives it a shadow of countenance. Lastly, Lady Scott always kept hanging by her bedside, and repeatedly kissed in her dying moments, a miniature of *her father* which is now in my hands; and it is the well painted likeness of a handsome gentleman—but I am assured the features have no resemblance to Lord Downshire or any of the Hill family.

very good friends. Anne Scott, the delicate sister to whom the Ashestiel Memoir alludes so tenderly, speedily formed a warm and sincere attachment for the stranger; but death, in a short time, carried off that interesting creature, who seems to have had much of her brother's imaginative and romantic temperament, without his power of controlling it.

Mrs Scott's arrival was welcomed with unmingled delight by the brothers of *The Mountain*. The two ladies who had formerly given life and grace to their society, were both recently married. Scott's house in South Castle Street (soon after exchanged for one of the same sort in North Castle Street, which he purchased, and inhabited down to 1826) became now what Cranstoun's and Erskine's had been while their accomplished sisters remained with them. The officers of the Light Horse, too, established a club among themselves, supping once a-week at each other's houses in rotation. The lady thus found two somewhat different, but both highly agreeable circles ready to receive her with cordial kindness; and the evening hours passed in a round of innocent gaiety, all the arrangements being conducted in a simple and inexpensive fashion, suitable to young people whose days were mostly laborious, and very few of their purses heavy. Scott and Erskine had always been fond of the theatre; the pretty bride was passionately so—and I doubt if they ever spent a week in Edinburgh without indulging themselves in this amusement. But regular dinners and crowded assemblies were in those years quite unthought of. Perhaps nowhere else could have been found a society on so small a scale including more of vigorous intellect, varied information, elegant tastes, and real virtue, affection, and mutual confidence. How often have I heard its members, in the midst of the wealth and honours which most of them in due season attained, sigh over the recollection of those humbler days, when love and ambition were young and buoyant—and no

difference of opinion was able to bring even a momentary chill over the warmth of friendship.

In the summer of 1798 Scott hired a cottage at Lasswade, on the Esk, about six miles from Edinburgh. It is a small house, but with one room of good dimensions, which Mrs Scott's taste set off to advantage at very humble cost—a paddock or two—and a garden (commanding a most beautiful view) in which Scott delighted to train his flowers and creepers. Never, I have heard him say, was he prouder of his handiwork than when he had completed the fashioning of a rustic archway, now overgrown with hoary ivy, by way of ornament to the entrance from the Edinburgh road. In this retreat they spent some happy summers, receiving the visits of their few chosen friends from the neighbouring city, and wandering at will amidst some of the most romantic scenery that Scotland can boast—Scott's dearest haunt in the days of his boyish ramblings. They had neighbours, too, who were not slow to cultivate their acquaintance. With the Clerks of Pennycuick, with Mackenzie the Man of Feeling, who then occupied the charming villa of Auchendinny, and with Lord Woodhouselee, Scott had from an earlier date been familiar; and it was while at Lasswade that he formed intimacies, even more important in their results, with the noble families of Melville and Buccleuch, both of whom have castles in the same valley.

"Sweet are the paths, O passing sweet,
By Esk's fair streams that run,
O'er airy steep, thro' copsewood deep
Impervious to the sun;

"From that fair dome where suit is paid
By blast of bugle free,
To Auchendinny's hazle shade,
And haunted Woodhouselee.

"Who knows not Melville's beechy grove,
And Roslin's rocky glen;
Dalkeith, which all the virtues love,
And classic Hawthornden?"

Another verse reminds us that

"There the rapt poet's step may rove;"—

and it was amidst these delicious solitudes that he did produce the pieces which laid the imperishable foundations of all his fame. It was here, that when his warm heart was beating with young and happy love, and his whole mind and spirit were nerved by new motives for exertion—it was here, that in the ripened glow of manhood he seems to have first felt something of his real strength, and poured himself out in those splendid original ballads which were at once to fix his name.

I must, however, approach these more leisurely. When William Erskine was in London in the spring of this year, he happened to meet in society with Matthew Gregory Lewis, M.P. for Hindon, whose romance of The Monk, with the ballads which it included, had made for him, in those barren days, a brilliant reputation. This good-natured fopling, the pet and plaything of certain fashionable circles, was then busy with that miscellany which at length came out in 1801, under the name of Tales of Wonder, and was beating up in all quarters for contributions. Erskine shewed Lewis the versions of Lenore and the Wild Huntsman; and when he mentioned that his friend had other specimens of the German *diablerie* in his portfolio, the collector anxiously requested that Scott might be enlisted in his cause;—and he, who was perhaps at all times rather disposed to hold popular favour as the surest test of literary merit, and who certainly continued through life to overestimate all talents except his own, considered this invitation as a very flattering compliment. He immediately wrote to Lewis, placing whatever pieces he had translated and imitated from the German *Volkslieder* at his disposal.

In the autumn Lewis made a tour into the north; and Scott told Allan Cunningham, thirty years afterwards, that he thought he had never felt such elation as when the

"Monk" invited him to dine with him for the first time at his hotel. Since he gazed on Burns in his seventeenth year, he had seen no one enjoying, by general consent, the fame of a poet; and Lewis, whatever Scott might, on maturer consideration, think of his title to such fame, had certainly done him no small service; for the ballads of Alonzo the Brave, &c., had rekindled effectually in his breast the spark of poetical ambition. Lady Charlotte Campbell (now Bury), always distinguished by her passion for letters, was ready, "in pride of rank, in beauty's bloom," to do the honours of Scotland to the Lion of Mayfair; and I believe Scott's first introduction to Lewis took place at one of her Ladyship's parties. But they met frequently, and, among other places, at Dalkeith—as witness one of Scott's marginal notes, written in 1825, on Lord Byron's Diary:—"Lewis was fonder of great people than he ought to have been, either as a man of talent or as a man of fashion. He had always dukes and duchesses in his mouth, and was pathetically fond of any one that had a title. You would have sworn he had been a *parvenu* of yesterday, yet he had lived all his life in good society. His person was extremely small and boyish—he was indeed the least man I ever saw, to be strictly well and neatly made. I remember a picture of him by Saunders being handed round at Dalkeith House. The artist had ingeniously flung a dark folding-mantle around the form, under which was half-hid a dagger, a dark lantern, or some such cut-throat appurtenance; with all this the features were preserved and ennobled. It passed from hand to hand into that of Henry, Duke of Buccleuch, who, hearing the general voice affirm that it was very like, said aloud, 'Like Mat Lewis! Why that picture 's like a MAN!' He looked, and lo, Mat Lewis's head was at his elbow."

Lewis spent a day or two with Scott at Musselburgh, where the yeomanry corps were in quarters. Scott received him in his lodgings, under the roof of an ancient

dame, who afforded him much amusement by her daily colloquies with the fishwomen—the *Mucklebackets* of the place. His delight in studying the dialect of these people is well remembered by the survivors of the cavalry, and must have astonished the stranger dandy. While walking about before dinner on one of these days, Mr Skene's recitation of the German *Kriegslied*, "Der Abschied's Tag ist da" (the day of departure is come), delighted both Lewis and the Quarter-Master; and the latter produced next morning that spirited little piece in the same measure, which, embodying the volunteer ardour of the time, was forthwith adopted as the troop-song of the Edinburgh Light-Horse.

In January 1799, Mr Lewis appears negotiating with a bookseller, named Bell, for the publication of Scott's version of Goethe's Tragedy, "Goetz von Berlichingen of the Iron Hand." Bell seems finally to have purchased the copy-right for twenty-five guineas, and twenty-five more to be paid in case of a second edition—which was never called for until long after the copy-right had expired. Lewis writes, "I have made him distinctly understand, that, if you accept so small a sum, it will be only because this is your first publication:"—the tiny adventure in 1796 had been completely forgotten. The *Goetz* appeared accordingly, with Scott's name on the title-page, in the following February.

In March 1799, he carried his wife to London, this being the first time that he had seen the metropolis since the days of his infancy. The acquaintance of Lewis served to introduce him to some literary and fashionable society, with which he was much amused; but his great anxiety was to examine the antiquities of the Tower and Westminster Abbey, and to make some researches among the MSS. of the British Museum. He found his Goetz spoken of favourably, on the whole, by the critics of the time; but it does not appear to have attracted general attention. The

truth is, that, to have given Goethe anything like a fair chance with the English public, his first drama ought to have been translated at least ten years before. The imitators had been more fortunate than the master, and this work, which constitutes one of the landmarks in the history of German literature, had not come even into Scott's hands, until he had familiarized himself with the ideas which it first opened, in the puny mimicries of writers already forgotten. He readily discovered the vast gulf which separated Goethe from the German dramatists on whom he had heretofore been employing himself; but the public in general drew no such distinctions, and the English Goetz was soon afterwards condemned to oblivion, through the unsparing ridicule showered on whatever bore the name of *German play*, by the inimitable caricature of The Rovers.

The tragedy of Goethe, however, has in truth nothing in common with the wild absurdities against which Canning and Ellis levelled the arrows of their wit. It is a broad, bold, free, and most picturesque delineation of real characters, manners, and events; the first fruits, in a word, of that passionate admiration for Shakespeare, to which all that is excellent in the recent imaginative literature of Germany must be traced. With what delight must Scott have found the scope and manner of our Elizabethan drama revived on a foreign stage at the call of a real master!—with what double delight must he have seen Goethe seizing for the noblest purposes of art, men and modes of life, scenes, incidents, and transactions, all claiming near kindred with those that had from boyhood formed the chosen theme of his own sympathy and reflection! In the baronial robbers of the Rhine, stern, bloody, and rapacious, but frank, generous, and, after their fashion, courteous—in their forays upon each other's domains, the besieged castles, the plundered herds, the captive knights, the browbeaten bishop, and the baffled liege-lord, who vainly strove to quell all these turbulences—Scott had before him a vivid image of

the life of his own and the rival Border clans, familiarized to him by a hundred nameless minstrels. If it be doubtful whether, but for Percy's Reliques, he would ever have thought of editing their Ballads, I think it not less so, whether, but for the Ironhanded Goetz, it would ever have flashed upon his mind, that in the wild traditions which these recorded, he had been unconsciously assembling materials for more works of high art than the longest life could serve him to elaborate.

He executed about the same time his "House of Aspen," rather a *rifacimento* than a translation from one of the minor dramatists that had crowded to partake the popularity of Goetz. It also was sent to Lewis in London, where, having been read and commended by the celebrated actress, Mrs Esten, it was taken up by Kemble, and I believe actually put in rehearsal for the stage. If so, the trial did not encourage further preparation, and the notion was abandoned. Discovering the play thirty years after among his papers, Scott sent it to the Keepsake of 1829. In the advertisement he says, "He had lately chanced to look over these scenes with feelings very different from those of the adventurous period of his literary life during which they were written, and yet with such, perhaps, as a reformed libertine might regard the illegitimate production of an early amour." He adds, "there is something to be ashamed of, certainly; but, after all, paternal vanity whispers that the child has some resemblance to the father." The scenes are interspersed with some lyrics, the numbers of which, at least, are worthy of attention. One has the metre—and not a little of the spirit—of the boat-song of Clan-Alpin:—

> "Joy to the victors, the sons of old Aspen,
> Joy to the race of the battle and scar!" &c. &c.

His return to Edinburgh was accelerated by the tidings of his father's death. This worthy man had had a succession of paralytic attacks, under which, mind as well as body

had by degrees been laid quite prostrate. When the first Chronicles of the Canongate appeared, a near relation of the family said to me—"I had been out of Scotland for some time, and did not know of my good friend's illness until I reached Edinburgh, a few months before his death. Walter carried me to visit him, and warned me that I should see a great change. I saw the very scene that is here painted of the elder Croftangry's sickroom—not a feature different —poor Anne Scott, the gentlest of creatures, was treated by the fretful patient precisely like this niece." I have lived to see the curtain rise and fall once more on a like scene.

Mr Thomas Scott continued to manage his father's business. He married early;[1] he was in his circle of society extremely popular; and his prospects seemed fair in all things. The property left by the old gentleman was less than had been expected, but sufficient to make ample provision for his widow, and a not inconsiderable addition to the resources of those among whom the remainder was divided.

Scott's mother and sister, both much exhausted with their attendance on a protracted sickbed, and the latter already in the first stage of the malady which in two years more carried her also to her grave, spent the greater part of the following summer and autumn in his cottage at Lasswade. There he was now again labouring assiduously in the service of Lewis's "hobgoblin repast;" and in an essay of 1830, he gives us sufficient specimens of the Monk's Editorial Letters to his contributor—the lectures of a "martinet in rhymes and numbers—severe enough, but useful eventually, as forcing on a young and careless versifier criticisms absolutely necessary to his future success." As to his imperfect *rhymes* of this period, I have no doubt

[1] Mrs Thomas Scott, born Miss Macculloch of Ardwell, was one of the best, and wisest, and most agreeable women I have ever known. She had a motherly affection for all Sir Walter's family —and she survived them all. She died at Canterbury in April 1848, aged 72.

he owed them to his recent zeal about collecting the ballads of the Border. He had, in his familiarity with compositions so remarkable for merits of a higher order, ceased to be offended, as in the days of his devotion to Langhorne and Mickle he would probably have been, with their loose and vague assonances, which are often, in fact, not rhymes at all; a licence pardonable enough in real minstrelsy, meant to be chanted to moss-troopers with the accompanying tones of the war-pipe, but certainly not worthy of imitation in verses written for the eye of a polished age. Of this carelessness as to rhyme, we see little or nothing in our few specimens of his boyish verse, and it does not occur, to any extent that has ever been thought worth notice, in his great works.

But Lewis's collection did not engross the leisure of this summer. It produced also what Scott justly calls his "first serious attempts in verse;" and of these, the earliest appears to have been the Glenfinlas. Here the scene is laid in the most favourite district of his favourite Perthshire Highlands; and the Gaelic tradition on which it is founded was far more likely to draw out the secret strength of his genius, as well as to arrest the feelings of his countrymen, than any subject with which the stores of German *diablerie* could have supplied him. It has been alleged, however, that the poet makes a German use of his Scottish materials; that the legend, as briefly told in the simple prose of his preface, is more *affecting* than the lofty and sonorous stanzas themselves; that the vague terror of the original dream loses, instead of gaining, by the expanded elaboration of the detail. There may be something in these objections: but no man can pretend to be an impartial critic of the piece which first awoke his own childish ear to the power of poetry and the melody of verse.

The next of these compositions was, I believe, the Eve of St John, in which Scott re-peoples the tower of Smail-

holm, the awe-inspiring haunt of his infancy; and here he touches, for the first time, the one superstition which can still be appealed to with full and perfect effect; the only one which lingers in minds long since weaned from all sympathy with the machinery of witches and goblins. And surely this mystery was never touched with more thrilling skill than in that noble ballad. It is the first of his original pieces, too, in which he uses the measure of his own favourite Minstrels; a measure which the monotony of mediocrity had long and successfully been labouring to degrade, but in itself adequate to the expression of the highest thoughts, as well as the gentlest emotions; and capable, in fit hands, of as rich a variety of music as any other of modern times. This was written at Mertoun-house in the autumn of 1799. Some dilapidations had taken place in the tower of Smailholm, and Harden, being informed of the fact, and entreated with needless earnestness by his kinsman to arrest the hand of the spoiler, requested playfully a ballad, of which Smailholm should be the scene, as the price of his assent.

Then came The Grey Brother, founded on another superstition, which seems to have been almost as ancient as the belief in ghosts; namely, that the holiest service of the altar cannot go on in the presence of an unclean person—a heinous sinner unconfessed and unabsolved. The fragmentary form of this poem greatly heightens the awfulness of its impression; and in construction and metre, the verses which really belong to the story appear to me the happiest that have ever been produced expressly in imitation of the ballad of the middle age. In the stanzas, previously quoted, on the scenery of the Esk, however beautiful in themselves, and however interesting now as marking the locality of the composition, he must be allowed to have lapsed into another strain, and produced a *pannus purpureus* which interferes with and mars the general texture.

He wrote at the same period the fine chivalrous ballad entitled The Fire-King, in which there is more than enough to make us forgive the machinery.

It was in the course of this autumn that he first visited Bothwell Castle, the seat of Archibald Lord Douglas, who had married Lady Frances Scott, sister to Henry Duke of Buccleuch; a woman whose many amiable virtues were combined with extraordinary strength of mind, and who had, from the first introduction of the young poet at Dalkeith, formed high anticipations of his future career. Lady Douglas was one of his dearest friends through life; and now, under her roof, he improved an acquaintance (begun also at Dalkeith) with one whose abilities and accomplishments not less qualified her to estimate him, and who still survives to lament the only event that could have interrupted their cordial confidence—Lady Louisa Stuart, daughter of the celebrated John Earl of Bute. These ladies, who were sisters in mind, feeling, and affection, he visited among scenes the noblest and most interesting that all Scotland can shew—alike famous in history and romance; and he was not unwilling to make Bothwell and Blantyre the subject of another ballad; of which, however, only a first and imperfect draft has been recovered.

One morning, during his visit to Bothwell, was spent on an excursion to the ruins of Craignethan Castle, the seat, in former days, of the great Evandale branch of the house of Hamilton, but now the property of Lord Douglas; and the poet expressed such rapture with the scenery, that his hosts urged him to accept, for his lifetime, the use of a small habitable house, enclosed within the circuit of the ancient walls. This offer was not at once declined; but circumstances occurred before the end of the year which rendered it impossible for him to establish his summer residence in Lanarkshire. The castle of Craignethan is the original of his "Tillietudlem."

His note-book of this year has supplied the recent edi-

tions of his poetry with several other ballads in an incomplete state: but notwithstanding all these varied essays, and the charms of the distinguished society into which his reputation had already introduced him, his friends do not appear to have as yet entertained the slightest notion that literature was to be the main business of his life. A letter of one very early correspondent, Mr Kerr of Abbotrule, congratulates him on his having had more to do at the autumnal assizes of Jedburgh this year than on any former occasion, which intelligence he seems himself to have communicated with no feeble expressions of satisfaction. "I greatly enjoy this," says Kerr. "Go on; and with your strong sense and hourly ripening knowledge, that you must rise to the top of the tree in the Parliament House in due season, I hold as certain as that Murray died Lord Mansfield. But don't let many an Ovid,[1] or rather many a Burns (which is better), be lost in you. I rather think men of business have produced as good poetry in their by-hours as the professed regulars; and I don't see any sufficient reason why Lord President Scott should not be a famous poet (in the vacation time), when we have seen a President Montesquieu step so nobly beyond the trammels in the *Esprit des Loix*. I suspect Dryden would have been a happier man had he had your profession. The reasoning talents visible in his verses, assure me that he would have ruled in Westminster Hall as easily as he did at Button's, and he might have found time enough besides for everything that one really honours his memory for." This friend appears to have entertained, in October 1799, the very opinion as to the *profession of literature* on which Scott acted through life.

Having again given a week to Liddesdale, in company with Mr Shortreed, he spent a few days at Rosebank, and

[1] How sweet an Ovid, Murray was our boast;
How many Martials were in Pult'ney lost.—*Dunciad*, iv. 170.

was preparing to return to Edinburgh for the winter, when he received a visit which had consequences of importance.

In the early days of Launcelot Whale, he had had for a classfellow Mr James Ballantyne, the eldest son of a decent shopkeeper in Kelso, and their acquaintance had never been altogether broken off, as Scott's visits to Rosebank were frequent, and the other had resided for a time in Edinburgh, when pursuing his education with a view to the profession of a solicitor. Mr Ballantyne had not been successful in his attempts to establish himself in that branch of the law, and was now the printer and editor of a weekly newspaper in his native town. He called at Rosebank one morning, and requested his old acquaintance to supply a few paragraphs on some legal question of the day for his *Kelso Mail.* Scott complied; and carrying his article himself to the printing-office, took with him also some of his recent pieces, designed to appear in Lewis's Collection. With these, especially, as his Memorandum says, the "Morlachian fragment after Goethe," Ballantyne was charmed, and he expressed his regret that Lewis's book was so long in appearing. Scott talked of Lewis with rapture; and, after reciting some of his stanzas, said—"I ought to apologise to you for having troubled you with anything of my own when I had things like this for your ear."—"I felt at once," says Ballantyne, "that his own verses were far above what Lewis could ever do, and though, when I said this, he dissented, yet he seemed pleased with the warmth of my approbation." At parting, Scott threw out a casual observation, that he wondered his old friend did not try to get some little booksellers' work, "to keep his types in play during the rest of the week." Ballantyne answered, that such an idea had not before occurred to him—that he had no acquaintance with the Edinburgh "trade;" but, if he had, his types were good, and he thought he could afford to work more cheaply than town-printers. Scott, "with his good humoured smile," said,—"You had better

try what you can do. You have been praising my little ballads; suppose you print off a dozen copies or so of as many as will make a pamphlet, sufficient to let my Edinburgh acquaintances judge of your skill for themselves." Ballantyne assented; and I believe exactly twelve copies of William and Ellen, The Fire-King, The Chase, and a few more of those pieces, were thrown off accordingly, with the title (alluding to the long delay of Lewis's Collection) of "Apology for Tales of Terror—1799." This first specimen of a press, afterwards so celebrated, pleased Scott; and he said to Ballantyne—"I have been for years collecting old Border ballads, and I think I could, with little trouble, put together such a selection from them as might make a neat little volume, to sell for four or five shillings. I will talk to some of the booksellers about it when I get to Edinburgh, and if the thing goes on, you shall be the printer." Ballantyne highly relished the proposal; and the result of this little experiment changed wholly the course of his worldly fortunes, as well as of his friend's.

Mr Ballantyne, after recounting this conversation, says:—"I do not believe that even at this time he seriously contemplated giving himself much to literature;" but I think a letter addressed to Ballantyne, in the following April, affords considerable reason to doubt the accuracy of this impression. Scott there states, that he and another acquaintance of the printer's had been consulting together as to the feasibility of "no less than a total plan of migration from Kelso to Edinburgh;" and proceeds to say, that, in his opinion, there was then a very favourable opening in Edinburgh for a new printing establishment, conducted by a man of talent and education. He mentions—besides the chance of a share in the printing of law-papers—firstly, a weekly newspaper of the higher class; secondly, a monthly magazine; and thirdly, an annual register, as undertakings all likely to be well received; suggests that the general

publishing trade itself was in a very languid condition; and ends with a hint that "pecuniary assistance, if wanted, might (no doubt) be procured on terms of a share, or otherwise." The coincidence of most of these air-drawn schemes with things afterwards realized, is certainly very striking. At the same time, between October 1799 and April 1800, there had occurred a change in Scott's personal affairs very likely to have strengthened, if not originated the design, which Ballantyne did not believe him to have seriously entertained at the time of their autumnal interview.

Shortly after the commencement of the Winter Session, the office of Sheriff-depute of Selkirkshire became vacant by the death of an early ally of Scott's, Andrew Plummer of Middlestead, a scholar and antiquary, who had entered with zeal into his ballad researches, and whose name occurs accordingly more than once in the notes to the Border Minstrelsy. Perhaps the community of their tastes may have had some part in suggesting to the Duke of Buccleuch, that Scott might fitly succeed Mr Plummer in the magistrature. Be that as it might, his Grace's influence was used with Mr Henry Dundas (afterwards Viscount Melville) who in those days had the general control of the Crown patronage in Scotland, and was prepared to look favourably on Scott's pretensions to some office of this description. Though neither the Duke nor this able Minister were at all addicted to literature, they had both seen him frequently under their own roofs, and been pleased with his manners and conversation; and he had by this time come to be on terms of affectionate intimacy with some of the younger members of either family. The Earl of Dalkeith (afterwards Duke Charles of Buccleuch), and his brother Lord Montagu, both participating with kindred ardour in the military patriotism of the period, had been thrown into his society under circumstances well qualified to ripen acquaintance into confidence. Robert Dundas, eldest son

of the Minister, had been one of Scott's companions in the High School; and he, too, had been of late a lively partaker in the business of the yeomanry cavalry; and, last not least, Scott always remembered with gratitude the strong intercession on this occasion of Lord Melville's nephews, Robert Dundas of Arniston, the Lord Advocate of the time, and William Dundas, then Secretary to the Board of Control.

His appointment to the *Sheriffship* bears date 16th December 1799. It secured him an annual salary of L.300; an addition to his resources which at once relieved his mind from whatever degree of anxiety he might have felt in considering the prospect of an increasing family, along with the ever precarious chances of a profession, in the daily drudgery of which it is impossible to suppose that he ever could have found much pleasure. The duties of the office were far from heavy; the territory, small, peaceful, and pastoral, was in great part the property of the Duke of Buccleuch; and he turned with redoubled zeal to his project of editing the ballads, many of the best of which belonged to this very district of his favourite Border—those "tales" which, as the Dedication of the Minstrelsy expresses it, had "in elder times celebrated the prowess and cheered the halls" of his noble patron's ancestors.

Scott found able assistants in the completion of his design. Richard Heber (long Member of Parliament for the University of Oxford) happened to spend this winter in Edinburgh, and was welcomed, as his talents and accomplishments entitled him to be, by the cultivated society of the place. With Scott, his multifarious learning, particularly his profound knowledge of the literary monuments of the middle ages, soon drew him into habits of close alliance; the stores of his library, even then extensive, were freely laid open, and his own oral commentaries were not less valuable. But through him Scott made acquaintance with a person still more qualified to give effectual aid in this undertaking. Few who read these pages can be unacquainted

with the leading facts in the history of John Leyden. Few can need to be reminded that this extraordinary man, born in a shepherd's cottage in one of the wildest valleys of Roxburghshire, and of course almost entirely self-educated, had, before he attained his nineteenth year, confounded the doctors of Edinburgh by the portentous mass of his acquisitions in almost every department of learning. He had set the extremest penury at utter defiance, or rather he had never been conscious that it could operate as a bar; for bread and water, and access to books and lectures, comprised all within the bounds of his wishes; and thus he toiled and battled at the gates of science after science, until his unconquerable perseverance carried everything before it; and yet with this monastic abstemiousness and iron hardness of will, perplexing those about him by manners and habits in which it was hard to say whether the moss-trooper or the schoolman of former days most prevailed, he was at heart a poet.

Archibald Constable, in after life one of the most eminent of British publishers, was at this period the keeper of a small book-shop, into which few but the poor students of Leyden's order had hitherto found their way. Heber, in the course of his bibliomanical prowlings, discovered that it contained some of

"The small old volumes, dark with tarnished gold,"

which were already the Delilahs of his imagination; and, moreover, that the young bookseller had himself a strong taste for such charmers. Frequenting the place, accordingly, he observed with some curiosity the countenance and gestures of another daily visitant, who came not to purchase, evidently, but to pore over the more recondite articles—often balanced for hours on a ladder with a folio in his hand like Dominie Sampson. The English virtuoso was on the look-out for any books or MSS. that might be of use to the editor of the projected "Minstrelsy," and some casual colloquy led to the discovery that this new stranger was, amidst the

endless labyrinth of his lore, a master of legend and tradition—an enthusiastic collector and skilful expounder of these very Border ballads. Scott heard with much interest Heber's account of his odd acquaintance, and found, when introduced, the person whose initials, affixed to a series of pieces in verse, chiefly translations from Greek, Latin, and the northern languages, scattered, during the last three or four years, over the pages of the "Edinburgh Magazine," had often much excited his curiosity, as various indications pointed out the Scotch Border to be the native district of this unknown "J. L."

These new friendships led to a great change in Leyden's position, purposes, and prospects. He was presently received into the best society of Edinburgh, where his uncouthness of demeanour does not seem to have at all interfered with the general appreciation of his genius, his endowments, and amiable virtues. Fixing his ambition on the East, where he hoped to rival the achievements of Sir William Jones, he at length, about the beginning of 1802, obtained the promise of some literary appointment in the East India Company's service; but when the time drew near, it was discovered that the patronage of the season had been exhausted, with the exception of one *surgeon-assistant's* commission—which had been with difficulty secured for him by Mr William Dundas; who, moreover, was obliged to inform him, that if he accepted it, he must be qualified to pass his medical trials within six months. This news, which would have crushed any other man's hopes to the dust, was only a welcome fillip to the ardour of Leyden. He that same hour grappled with a new science in full confidence that whatever ordinary men could do in three or four years, his energy could accomplish in as many months; took his degree accordingly in the beginning of 1803, having just before published his beautiful poem, The Scenes of Infancy; sailed to India; raised for himself, within seven short years, the reputation of the most mar-

vellous of Orientalists; and died, in the midst of the proudest hopes, at the same age with Burns and Byron, in 1811.

But to return:—Leyden was enlisted by Scott in the service of Lewis, and immediately contributed a ballad, called The Elf-King, to the Tales of Terror. Those highly-spirited pieces, the Cout of Keeldar, Lord Soulis, and The Mermaid, were furnished for the original department of Scott's own collection: and the Dissertation on Fairies, prefixed to its second volume, "although arranged and digested by the editor, abounds with instances of such curious reading as Leyden only had read, and was originally compiled by him;" but not the least of his labours was in the collection of the old ballads themselves. When he first conversed with Ballantyne on the subject of the proposed work, and the printer signified his belief that a single volume of moderate size would be sufficient for the materials, Leyden exclaimed—"Dash it, does Mr Scott mean another thin thing like Goetz of Berlichingen? I have more than that in my head myself: we shall turn out three or four such volumes at least." He went to work stoutly in the realization of these wider views. "In this labour," says Scott, "he was equally interested by friendship for the editor, and by his own patriotic zeal for the honour of the Scottish borders; and both may be judged of from the following circumstance. An interesting fragment had been obtained of an ancient historical ballad; but the remainder, to the great disturbance of the editor and his coadjutor, was not to be recovered. Two days afterwards, while the editor was sitting with some company after dinner, a sound was heard at a distance like that of the whistling of a tempest through the torn rigging of the vessel which scuds before it. The sounds increased as they approached more near; and Leyden (to the great astonishment of such of the guests as did not know him) burst into the room, chanting the desiderated ballad with the most enthusiastic

gesture, and all the energy of what he used to call the *saw-tones* of his voice. It turned out that he had walked between forty and fifty miles and back again, for the sole purpose of visiting an old person who possessed this precious remnant of antiquity." [1]

During the years 1800 and 1801, the Minstrelsy formed its editor's chief occupation—a labour of love truly, if ever such there was; but neither this nor his sheriffship interfered with his regular attendance at the Bar, the abandonment of which was all this while as far as it ever had been from his imagination, or that of any of his friends. He continued to have his summer headquarters at Lasswade; and Sir John Stoddart, who visited him there in the course of his Scottish tour (published in 1801), dwells on "the simple unostentatious elegance of the cottage, and the domestic picture which he there contemplated—a man of native kindness and cultivated talent, passing the intervals of a learned profession amidst scenes highly favourable to his poetic inspirations, not in churlish and rustic solitude, but in the daily exercise of the most precious sympathies as a husband, a father, and a friend." His means of hospitality were now much enlarged, and the cottage on a Saturday and Sunday at least, was seldom without visitors.

Among other indications of greater ease in his circumstances, which I find in his letter-book, he writes to Heber, after his return to London in May 1800, to request his good offices on behalf of Mrs Scott, who had "set her

[1] *Essay on the Life of Leyden*—Miscellaneous Prose. Many tributes to his memory are scattered over his friend's works, both prose and verse; and, above all, Scott did not forget him when exploring, three years after his death, the scenery of The Lord of the Isles:—

"Scenes sung by him who sings no more:
His bright and brief career is o'er,
And mute his tuneful strains;
Quench'd is his lamp of varied lore,
That loved the light of song to pour;
A distant and a deadly shore
Has Leyden's cold remains!"

heart on a phaeton, at once strong, and low, and handsome, and not to cost more than thirty guineas;" which combination of advantages Heber seems to have found by no means easy of attainment. The phaeton was, however, discovered; and its springs must soon have been put to a sufficient trial, for this was "the first wheeled carriage that ever penetrated into Liddesdale"—namely, in August 1800. The friendship of the Buccleuch family now placed better means of research at his disposal, and Lord Dalkeith had taken special care that there should be a band of pioneers in waiting when he reached Hermitage.

Though he had not given up Lasswade, his sheriffship now made it necessary for him that he should be frequently in Ettrick Forest. On such occasions he took up his lodgings in the little inn at Clovenford, a favourite fishing station on the road from Edinburgh to Selkirk. From this place he could ride to the county town whenever business required his presence, and he was also within a few miles of the vales of Yarrow and Ettrick, where he obtained large accessions to his store of ballads. It was in one of these excursions that, penetrating beyond St Mary's lake, he found a hospitable reception at the farm of *Blackhouse*, situated on the Douglas-burn, then tenanted by a remarkable family, to which I have already made allusion—that of William Laidlaw. He was then a very young man, but the extent of his acquirements was already as noticeable as the vigour and originality of his mind; and their correspondence where "Sir" passes, at a few bounds, through "Dear Sir," and "Dear Mr Laidlaw," to "Dear Willie," shews how speedily this new acquaintance had warmed into a very tender affection. Laidlaw's zeal about the ballads was repaid by Scott's anxious endeavours to get him removed from a sphere for which, he writes, "it is no flattery to say that you are much too good." It was then, and always continued to be, his opinion, that his friend was particularly qualified for entering with advantage on the

study of the medical profession; but such designs, if Laidlaw himself ever took them up seriously, were not ultimately persevered in; and I question whether any worldly success could, after all, have overbalanced the retrospect of an honourable life spent happily in the open air of nature, amidst scenes the most captivating to the eye of genius, and in the intimate confidence of, perhaps, the greatest of contemporary minds.

James Hogg spent ten years of his life in the service of Mr Laidlaw's father, but he had passed into that of another sheep-farmer in a neighbouring valley, before Scott first visited Blackhouse. William Laidlaw and Hogg were, however, most intimate friends, and the former took care that Scott should see, without delay, one whose fondness for the minstrelsy of the Forest was equal to his own, and whose aged mother was celebrated for having by heart several ballads in a more perfect form than any other inhabitant of the vale of Ettrick. The personal history of James Hogg must have interested Scott even more than any acquisition of that sort which he owed to this acquaintance with, perhaps, the most remarkable man that ever wore the *maud* of a shepherd. Under the garb, aspect, and bearing of a rude peasant—and rude enough he was in most of these things, even after no inconsiderable experience of society—Scott found a brother poet, a true son of nature and genius, hardly conscious of his powers. He had taught himself to write by copying the letters of a printed book as he lay watching his flock on the hill-side, and had probably reached the utmost pitch of his ambition, when he first found that his artless rhymes could touch the heart of the ewe-milker who partook the shelter of his mantle during the passing storm. As yet his naturally kind and simple character had not been exposed to any of the dangerous flatteries of the world; his heart was pure, his enthusiasm buoyant as that of a happy child; and well as Scott knew that reflection, sagacity, wit, and wisdom, were

scattered abundantly among the humblest rangers of these pastoral solitudes, there was here a depth and a brightness that filled him with wonder, combined with a quaintness of humour, and a thousand little touches of absurdity, which afforded him more entertainment, as I have often heard him say, than the best comedy that ever set the pit in a roar.

Scott opened in the same year a correspondence with the venerable Bishop of Dromore, who seems, however, to have done little more than express a warm interest in an undertaking so nearly resembling that which will ever keep his own name in remembrance. He had more success in his applications to a more unpromising quarter—namely, with Joseph Ritson, the ancient and virulent assailant of Bishop Percy's editorial character. This narrow-minded, sour, and dogmatical little word-catcher had hated the very name of a Scotsman, and was utterly incapable of sympathizing with any of the higher views of his new correspondent. Yet the bland courtesy of Scott disarmed even this half-crazy pedant; and he communicated the stores of his really valuable learning in a manner that seems to have greatly surprised all who had hitherto held any intercourse with him on antiquarian topics. It astonished, above all, the amiable and elegant George Ellis, whose acquaintance was about the same time opened to Scott through their common friend Heber. Mr Ellis was now busily engaged in collecting the materials for his charming works, entitled Specimens of Ancient English Poetry, and Specimens of Ancient English Romance. The correspondence between him and Scott soon came to be constant. They met personally, before many letters had been exchanged, conceived for each other a cordial respect and affection, and continued on a footing of almost brotherly intimacy ever after. To this alliance, Scott owed, among other advantages, his early and ready admission to the acquaintance and familiarity of Ellis's bosom friend, his

coadjutor in the Anti-jacobin, and the confidant of all his literary schemes, Mr Canning.

Scott spent the Christmas of 1801 at Hamilton Palace, in Lanarkshire. To Lady Anne Hamilton he had been introduced by her friend, Lady Charlotte Campbell, and both the late and present Dukes of Hamilton appear to have partaken of Lady Anne's admiration for Glenfinlas and the Eve of St John. A morning's ramble to the majestic ruins of the old baronial castle on the precipitous banks of the Evan, and among the adjoining remains of the primeval Caledonian forest, suggested to him a ballad, not inferior in execution to any he had hitherto produced, and especially interesting as the first in which he grapples with the world of picturesque incident unfolded in the authentic annals of Scotland. With the magnificent localities before him he skilfully interwove the daring assassination of the Regent Murray by one of the clansmen of "the princely Hamilton." Had the subject been taken up in after years, we might have had another Marmion or Heart of Mid-Lothian; for in Cadyow Castle we have the materials and outline of more than one of the noblest of ballads.

About two years before this piece began to be handed about in Edinburgh, Thomas Campbell had made his appearance there, and at once seized a high place in the literary world by his "Pleasures of Hope." Among the most eager to welcome him had been Scott; and I find the brother-bard thus expressing himself concerning the MS. of Cadyow:—"The verses of Cadyow Castle are perpetually ringing in my imagination—

> Where, mightiest of the beasts of chase
> That roam in woody Caledon,
> Crashing the forest in his race,
> The mountain bull comes thundering on—

and the arrival of Hamilton, when

> Reeking from the recent deed,
> He dashed his carbine on the ground.

I have repeated these lines so often on the North Bridge, that the whole fraternity of coachmen know me by tongue as I pass. To be sure, to a mind in sober, serious street-walking humour, it must bear an appearance of lunacy when one stamps with the hurried pace and fervent shake of the head, which strong, pithy poetry excites."

According to the original intention, the *Sir Tristrem*, an imperfect romance, ascribed to Thomas of Ercildoune, the famous old seer and bard of the border, was to have had a prominent place in the first *livraison* of the Minstrelsy; but from the rapid accumulation of matter for notes, as well as of unprinted ballads, this plan was dropped. The Cadyow Castle, too, was ready, but "two volumes," as Ballantyne says, "were already full to overflowing;" so it also was reserved for a third.

Volumes I. and II. appeared in January 1802, from the respectable house of Cadell and Davies in the Strand; and, owing to the cold reception of Lewis's Tales of Wonder, which had come forth a year earlier, these may be said to have first introduced Scott as an original writer to the English public. In his Remarks on the imitation of Popular Poetry, he says:—"When the book came out, the imprint, Kelso, was read with wonder by amateurs of typography, who had never heard of such a place, and were astonished at the example of handsome printing which so obscure a town had produced." One of the embellishments was a view of Hermitage Castle, the history of which is rather curious. Scott executed a rough sketch of it during the last of his "Liddesdale raids" with Shortreed, standing for that purpose for an hour or more up to his middle in the snow. Nothing can be ruder than the performance; but his friend William Clerk made a better drawing from it; and from his, a third and further improved copy was done by Hugh Williams, the elegant artist, afterwards known as "Greek Williams."[1] Scott used

[1] His *Travels in Greece* were published in 1820.

to say, the oddest thing of all was, that the engraving, founded on the labours of three draughtsmen, one of whom could not draw a straight line, and the two others had never seen the place meant to be represented, was nevertheless pronounced by the natives of Liddesdale to give a very fair notion of the ruins of Hermitage. The edition was exhausted in the course of the year, and the terms of publication having been that Scott should have half the clear profits, his share was exactly L.78, 10s.—a sum which certainly could not have repaid him for the actual expenditure incurred in the collection of his materials.

The work was received with very great delight by Ellis; and I might fill many pages by transcribing applausive letters from others of acknowledged discernment in this branch of literature. John Duke of Roxburgh is among the number, and he conveys also a complimentary message from Lord Spencer; Pinkerton issues his decree of approbation as *ex cathedrâ;* Chalmers overflows with heartier praise; and even Joseph Ritson extols his presentation copy as "the most valuable literary treasure in his possession." There follows enough of female admiration to have been dangerous for another man; a score of fine ladies contend who shall be the most extravagant in encomium—and as many professed blue-stockings come after; among, or rather above the rest, Anna Seward, "the Swan of Lichfield," who laments that her "bright luminary," Darwin, does not survive to partake her raptures; —observes, that "in the Border Ballads the first strong rays of the Delphic orb illuminate Jellon Graeme;" and concludes with a fact indisputable, but strangely expressed, viz. that "the Lady Anne Bothwell's Lament, Cowdenknowes, &c. &c., *climatically* preceded the treasures of Burns, and the consummate Glenfinlas and Eve of St John."

The reception of the first volumes elated naturally their printer, whom George Ellis dubs "the Bulmer of Kelso."

He also went up to London to cultivate acquaintance with publishers, and on his return writes thus to his employer:—"I shall ever think the printing the Scottish Minstrelsy one of the most fortunate circumstances of my life. I have gained, not lost by it, in a pecuniary light; and the prospects it has been the means of opening to me, may advantageously influence my future destiny. I can never be sufficiently grateful for the interest you unceasingly take in my welfare. One thing is clear—that Kelso cannot be my abiding place for aye." The great bookseller, Longman, repaired to Scotland soon after this, and made an offer for the copyright of the Minstrelsy, the third volume included. This was accepted, and it was at last settled that Sir Tristrem should appear in a separate shape. In July Scott proceeded to the Borders with Leyden. "We have just concluded," he tells Ellis, "an excursion of two or three weeks through my jurisdiction of Selkirkshire, where, in defiance of mountains, rivers, and bogs, damp and dry, we have penetrated the very recesses of Ettrick Forest, to which district, if I ever have the happiness of welcoming you, you will be convinced that I am truly the sheriff of the 'cairn and the scaur.' In the course of our grand tour, besides the risks of swamping and breaking our necks, we encountered the formidable hardships of sleeping upon peat-stacks, and eating mutton slain by no common butcher, but deprived of life by the judgment of God, as a coroner's inquest would express themselves. I have, however, not only escaped safe 'per varios casus, per tot discrimina rerum,' but returned *loaded* with the treasures of oral tradition. The principal result of our inquiries has been a complete and perfect copy of Maitland with his Auld Berd Graie, referred to by Douglas in his Palice of Honour. You may guess the surprise of Leyden and myself when this was presented to us, copied down from the recitation of an old shepherd, by a country farmer, and with no greater corruptions than

might be supposed to be introduced by the lapse of time, and the ignorance of reciters."

Leyden seems to have spent much of that autumn at the Lasswade cottage, and here he encountered Joseph Ritson. Their host delighted to detail the scene that occurred when his two rough allies first met at dinner. Well knowing Ritson's holy horror of all animal food, Leyden complained that the joint on the table was overdone. "Indeed, for that matter," cried he, "meat can never be too little done, and raw is best of all." He sent to the kitchen accordingly for a plate of literally raw beef, and manfully ate it up, with no sauce but the exquisite ruefulness of the Pythagorean's glances. Mr R. Gillies, a gentleman of the Scotch Bar (since known for some excellent translations from the German), was present another day when Ritson was in Scotland. "In approaching the cottage," he says, "I was struck with the exceeding air of neatness that prevailed around. The hand of tasteful cultivation had been there, and all methods employed to convert an ordinary thatched cottage into a handsome and comfortable abode. At this early period, Scott was more like the portrait by Saxon, engraved for the Lady of the Lake, than to any subsequent picture. He retained in features and form an impress of that elasticity and youthful vivacity, which he used to complain wore off after he was forty, and by *his own* account was exchanged for the plodding heaviness of an operose student. He had now, indeed, somewhat of a boyish gaiety of look, and in person was tall, slim, and extremely active." He and Erskine were about to start on a walk to Roslin, and Mr Gillies accompanied them. In the course of their walk, Scott's foot slipped, as he was scrambling towards a cave on the edge of a precipitous bank, and "had there been no trees in the way" (says this writer), "he must have been killed; but midway he was stopped by a large root of hazel, when, instead of struggling, which would have made

matters greatly worse, he seemed perfectly resigned to his fate, and slipped through the tangled thicket till he lay flat on the river's brink. He rose in an instant from his recumbent attitude, and with a hearty laugh called out—Now, let me see who else will do the like. He scrambled up the cliff with alacrity, and entered the cave, where we had a long dialogue." Even after he was an old and hoary man, he continually encountered such risks with the same recklessness. The extraordinary strength of his hands and arms was his great reliance in all such difficulties, and if he could see anything to lay hold of, he was afraid of no leap, or rather hop, that came in his way. Mr Gillies adds, that when they drew near the famous chapel of Roslin, Erskine expressed a hope that they might, as habitual visitors, escape hearing the usual endless story of the old woman that shewed the ruins; but Scott answered, "There is a pleasure in the song which none but the songstress knows, and by telling her we know it all already, we should make the poor devil unhappy."

On their return to the cottage, Scott inquired for *the learned cabbage-eater*, who had been expected to dinner. "Indeed," answered his wife, "you may be happy he is not here—he is so very disagreeable. Mr Leyden, I believe, frightened him away." It turned out that it was even so. When Ritson appeared, a round of cold beef was on the luncheon-table, and Mrs Scott, forgetting his peculiar creed, offered him a slice. "The antiquary, in his indignation, expressed himself in such outrageous terms to the lady, that Leyden first tried to correct him by ridicule, and then, on the madman growing more violent, became angry in his turn, till at last he threatened, that if he were not silent, he would *thraw his neck*. Scott shook his head at this recital, which Leyden observing, grew vehement in his own justification. Scott said not a word in reply, but took up a large bunch of feathers fastened to a stick, denominated *a duster*, and shook it about the stu-

dent's ears till he laughed—then changed the subject." All this is very characteristic of the parties.—Scott's playful aversion to dispute was a trait in his mind and manners, that could alone have enabled him to make use at one and the same time, and for the same purpose, of two such persons as Ritson and Leyden.[1]

Shortly after this visit, Leyden went to London, and in the letter that introduced him to Ellis, Scott mentions, among other things to be included in the third volume of the Minstrelsy, "a long poem" from his own pen—"a kind of romance of Border chivalry, in a light-horseman sort of stanza." This refers to the first draught of The Lay of the Last Minstrel; and the author's description of it as being "in a light-horseman sort of stanza," was probably suggested by the circumstances under which the greater part of that draught had been accomplished. He has told us, in his Introduction of 1830, that the poem originated in a request of the young and lovely Countess of Dalkeith, that he would write a ballad on the legend of Gilpin Horner: that he began it at Lasswade, and read the opening stanzas, as soon as they were written, to Erskine and Cranstoun: that their reception of these was apparently so cold as to disgust him with what he had done; but that finding, a few days afterwards, that the verses had nevertheless excited their curiosity, and haunted their memory, he was encouraged to resume the undertaking. The scene and date of this resumption I owe to the recollection of the then Cornet of the Light-horse. While the troop were on permanent duty at Musselburgh, in the autumnal recess of 1802, the Quarter-Master, during a charge on Portobello sands, received a kick of a horse, which confined him for three days to his lodgings. Mr Skene found him busy with his pen; and he produced before these three days expired the first

[1] See Gillies's Reminiscences of Sir Walter Scott.

canto of the Lay, very nearly, if his friend's memory may be trusted, in the state in which it was ultimately published. That the whole poem was sketched and filled in with extraordinary rapidity, there can be no difficulty in believing. He himself says (in the Introduction of 1830), that after he had once got fairly into the vein, it proceeded at the rate of about a canto in a week. The Lay, however, like the Tristrem, soon outgrew the dimensions which he had originally contemplated; the design of including it in the third volume of the Minstrelsy was of course abandoned; and it did not appear until nearly three years after that fortunate mishap on the beach of Portobello.

Next spring, Scott hurried up to London as soon as the Court rose, in hopes of seeing Leyden once more before he left England; but he came too late. He thus writes to Ballantyne, on the 21st April 1803:—"I have to thank you for the accuracy with which the Minstrelsy is thrown off. Longman and Rees are delighted with the printing. I mean this note to be added, by way of advertisement:—'In the press, and will speedly be published, the Lay of the Last Minstrel, by Walter Scott, Esq., Editor of the Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border. Also Sir Tristrem, a Metrical Romance, by Thomas of Ercildoune, called the Rhymer, edited from an ancient MS., with an Introduction and Notes, by Walter Scott, Esq.' Will you cause such a thing to be appended in your own way and fashion?"

This letter is dated "No. 15 Piccadilly West,"—he and Mrs Scott being there domesticated under the roof of the late M. Charles Dumergue, a man of superior abilities and excellent education, well known as surgeon-dentist to the royal family—who had been intimately acquainted with the Charpentiers in France, and warmly befriended Mrs Scott's mother on her first arrival in England. M. Dumergue's house was, throughout the whole period of the emigration, liberally opened to the exiles of his native country; nor did some of the noblest of those unfortunate re-

fugees scruple to make a free use of his purse, as well as of his hospitality. Here Scott met much highly interesting French society, and until a child of his own was established in London, he never thought of taking up his abode anywhere else, as often as he had occasion to be in town.

The letter is addressed to "Mr James Ballantyne, printer, Abbey-hill, Edinburgh;" which shews, that before the third volume of the Minstrelsy passed through the press, the migration recommended two years earlier had at length taken place. "It was about the end of 1802," says Ballantyne, "that I closed with a plan so congenial to my wishes. I removed, bag and baggage, to Edinburgh, finding accommodation for two presses, and a proof one, in the precincts of Holyrood-house, then deriving new lustre and interest from the recent arrival of the royal exiles of France. In these obscure premises some of the most beautiful productions of what we called *The Border Press* were printed." The Memorandum states, that Scott having renewed his hint as to pecuniary assistance, as soon as the printer found his finances straitened, "a liberal loan was advanced accordingly."

Heber, and Macintosh, then at the height of his reputation as a conversationist, and daily advancing also at the Bar, had been ready to welcome Scott in town as old friends; and Rogers, William Stewart Rose, and several other men of literary eminence, were at the same time added to the list of his acquaintance. His principal object, however—having missed Leyden—was to make extracts from some MSS. in the library of John Duke of Roxburgh, for the illustration of the Tristrem; and he derived no small assistance in other researches of the like kind from the collections which the indefatigable and obliging Douce placed at his disposal. Having completed these labours, he and Mrs Scott went, with Heber and Douce, to visit Ellis at Sunninghill, where they spent a happy week, and their host and hostess heard the first two

or three cantos of the Lay of the Last Minstrel read under an old oak in Windsor Forest.

From thence they proceeded to Oxford, accompanied by Heber; and it was on this occasion that Scott first saw his friend's brother, Reginald, in afterdays the apostolic Bishop of Calcutta. He had just been declared the successful candidate for that year's poetical prize, and read to Scott at breakfast, in Brazen Nose College, the MS. of his Palestine. Scott observed that, in the verses on Solomon's Temple, one striking circumstance had escaped him, namely, that no tools were used in its erection. Reginald retired for a few minutes to the corner of the room, and returned with the beautiful lines,—

> "No hammer fell, no ponderous axes rung,
> Like some tall palm the mystic fabric sprung.
> Majestic silence," &c.

After inspecting the University and Blenheim, Scott returned to Edinburgh, where the completed Minstrelsy was published in the end of May. The reprint of the 1st and 2d volumes went to 1000 copies—of volume third Messrs Longman had ordered 1500. A complete edition of 1250 copies followed in 1806; a fourth, also of 1250, in 1810; a fifth, of 1500, in 1812; a sixth, of 500, in 1820; and since then it has been incorporated in Scott's Collected Poetry. Of the Continental and American editions I can say nothing, except that they have been very numerous. The book was soon translated into German, Danish, and Swedish; and the structure of those languages being very favourable to the undertaking, the Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border has thus become widely naturalized among nations themselves rich in similar treasures of legendary lore.

He speaks, in an Essay of his closing years, as if the first reception of the Minstrelsy on the south of the Tweed had been cold. "The curiosity of the English," he says, "was not much awakened by poems in the rude garb of antiquity,

accompanied with notes referring to the obscure feuds of barbarous clans, of whose very names civilized history was ignorant." In writing those beautiful Introductions of 1830, however, he seems to have trusted entirely to his recollection of days long gone by, and he has accordingly let fall many statements which we must take with some allowance. His impressions as to the reception of the Minstrelsy were different, when writing to his brother-in-law, Charles Carpenter, on the 3d March 1803, for the purpose of introducing Leyden, he said—"I have contrived to turn a very slender portion of literary talents to some account, by a publication of the poetical antiquities of the Border, where the old people had preserved many ballads descriptive of the manners of the country during the wars with England. This trifling collection was so well received by a *discerning public*, that, after receiving about L.100 profit for the first edition, which my vanity cannot omit informing you went off in six months, I have sold the copyright for L.500 more." This is not the language of disappointment; and though the edition of 1803 did not move off quite so rapidly as the first, and the work did not perhaps attract much notice beyond the more cultivated students of literature, until the Editor's own Lay lent general interest to whatever was connected with his name, I suspect there never was much ground for accusing the English public of regarding the Minstrelsy with more coldness than the Scotch—the population of the Border districts themselves being, of course, excepted. Had the sale of the original edition been chiefly Scotch, I doubt whether Messrs Longman would have so readily offered L.500, in those days of the trade a large sum, for the second. Scott had become habituated, long before 1830, to a scale of bookselling transactions, measured by which the largest editions and copy-monies of his own early days appeared insignificant; but the evidence seems complete that he was well contented at the time.

He certainly had every reason to be so as to the impression which the Minstrelsy made on the minds of those entitled to think for themselves upon such a subject. The ancient ballads in his collection, which had never been printed at all before, were in number forty-three; and of the others—most of which were in fact all but new to the modern reader—it is little to say that his editions were superior in all respects to those that had preceded them. He had, I firmly believe, interpolated hardly a line or even an epithet of his own; but his diligent zeal had put him in possession of a variety of copies in different stages of preservation; and to the task of selecting a standard text among such a diversity of materials, he brought a knowledge of old manners and phraseology, and a manly simplicity of taste, such as had never before been united in the person of a poetical antiquary. From among a hundred corruptions he seized, with instinctive tact, the primitive diction and imagery; and produced strains in which the unbroken energy of half-civilized ages, their stern and deep passions, their daring adventures and cruel tragedies, and even their rude wild humour, are reflected with almost the brightness of a Homeric mirror, interrupted by hardly a blot of what deserves to be called vulgarity, and totally free from any admixture of artificial sentimentalism. As a picture of manners, the Scottish Minstrelsy is not surpassed, if equalled, by any similar body of poetry preserved in any other country; and it unquestionably owes its superiority in this respect over Percy's Reliques, to the Editor's conscientious fidelity, on the one hand, which prevented the introduction of anything new—to his pure taste, on the other, in the balancing of discordant recitations. His introductory essays and notes teemed with curious knowledge, not hastily grasped for the occasion, but gradually gleaned and sifted by the patient labour of years, and presented with an easy, unaffected propriety and elegance of arrangement and expression, which it may be doubted if he ever materially

surpassed in the happiest of his imaginative narrations. I well remember, when Waverley was a new book, and all the world were puzzling themselves about its authorship, to have heard the Poet of "The Isle of Palms" exclaim impatiently—"I wonder what all these people are perplexing themselves with: have they forgotten the *prose* of the Minstrelsy?" Even had the Editor inserted none of his own verse, the work would have contained enough, and more than enough, to found a lasting and graceful reputation.

It is not to be denied, however, that the Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border has derived a very large accession of interest from the subsequent career of its Editor. One of the critics of that day said that the book contained "the elements of a hundred historical romances;"—and this critic was a prophetic one. No person who has not gone through its volumes for the express purpose of comparing their contents with his great original works, can have formed a conception of the endless variety of incidents and images now expanded and emblazoned by his mature art. of which the first hints may be found either in the text of those primitive ballads, or in the notes, which the happy rambles of his youth had gathered together for their illustration. In the edition of the Minstrelsy published since his death, not a few such instances are pointed out; but the list might have been extended far beyond the limits which such an edition allowed. The taste and fancy of Scott appear to have been formed as early as his moral character; and he had, before he passed the threshold of authorship, assembled about him, in the uncalculating delight of native enthusiasm, almost all the materials on which his genius was destined to be employed for the gratification and instruction of the world.

CHAPTER IV.

Contributions to the Edinburgh Review—Wordsworth—Hogg—Sir Tristrem—Removal to Ashestiel—Mungo Park—Publication of the Lay of the Last Minstrel—Partnership with James Ballantyne—Visit to London—Appointment as Clerk of Session. 1804–1806.

Shortly after the complete "Minstrelsy" issued from the press, Scott made his first appearance as a reviewer. The Edinburgh Review had been commenced in October 1802, under the superintendence of the Rev. Sydney Smith, with whom, during his short residence in Scotland, he had lived on terms of great kindness and familiarity. Mr Smith soon resigned the editorship to Mr Jeffrey, who had by this time been for several years among the most valued of Scott's friends and companions at the Bar; and, the new journal being far from committing itself to violent politics at the outset, he appreciated the brilliant talents regularly engaged in it far too highly, not to be well pleased with the opportunity of occasionally exercising his pen in its service. His first contribution was an article on Southey's Amadis of Gaul. The reader may now trace the sequence of his articles in the Collective edition of his Miscellaneous Prose (1836).

During the summer of 1803, his chief literary work was on the *Sir Tristrem*, but the Lay of the Last Minstrel made progress at intervals—mostly, it would seem, when he was in quarters with his troop of horse, and necessarily without his books of reference. The resumption of the war (after the short peace of Amiens) had given renewed animation to the volunteers, and their spirit was kept up

during two or three years more by the unintermitted threats of invasion. His letters abound in sketches of the camp-life at Musselburgh. To Miss Seward, for example, he says, in July:—"We are assuming a very military appearance. Three regiments of militia, with a formidable park of artillery, are encamped just by us. The Edinburgh Troop, to which I have the honour to be quartermaster, consists entirely of young gentlemen of family, and is, of course, admirably well mounted and armed. There are other four troops in the regiment, consisting of yeomanry, whose iron faces and muscular forms announce the hardness of the climate against which they wrestle, and the powers which nature has given them to contend with and subdue it. These corps have been easily raised in Scotland, the farmers being in general a high-spirited race of men, fond of active exercises, and patient in hardship and fatigue. For myself, I must own that to one who has, like myself, *la tête un peu exaltée*, 'the pomp and circumstance of war' gives, for a time, a very poignant and pleasing sensation. The imposing appearance of cavalry, in particular, and the rush which marks their onset, appear to me to partake highly of the sublime. Perhaps I am the more attached to this sort of sport of swords because my health requires much active exercise, and a lameness contracted in childhood renders it inconvenient for me to take it otherwise than on horseback. I have, too, a hereditary attachment to the animal—not, I flatter myself, of the common jockey cast, but because I regard him as the kindest and most generous of the subordinate tribes. I hardly even except the dogs; at least they are usually so much better treated, that compassion for the steed should he thrown into the scale when we weigh their comparative merits. My wife (a foreigner) never sees a horse ill-used without asking what the poor horse has done in his state of pre-existence? I would fain hope they have been carters or hackney-coachmen, and are

only experiencing a retort of the ill-usage they have formerly inflicted. What think you?"

It was in that autumn that Scott first saw Wordsworth. Their common acquaintance, Stoddart, had so often talked of them to each other, that they met as if they had not been strangers; and they parted friends.

Mr and Miss Wordsworth had just completed their tour in the Highlands, of which so many incidents have since been immortalized, both in the poet's verse and in the hardly less poetical prose of his sister's Diary. On the morning of the 17th of September, having left their carriage at Roslin, they walked down the valley to Lasswade, and arrived there before Mr and Mrs Scott had risen. "We were received," Mr Wordsworth has told me, "with that frank cordiality which, under whatever circumstances I afterwards met him, always marked his manners; and, indeed, I found him then in every respect—except, perhaps, that his animal spirits were somewhat higher—precisely the same man that you knew him in later life; the same lively, entertaining conversation, full of anecdote, and averse from disquisition; the same unaffected modesty about himself; the same cheerful and benevolent and hopeful views of man and the world. He partly read and partly recited, sometimes in an enthusiastic style of chant, the first four cantos of the Lay of the Last Minstrel; and the novelty of the manners, the clear picturesque descriptions, and the easy glowing energy of much of the verse, greatly delighted me."

After this he walked with the tourists to Roslin, and promised to meet them in two days at Melrose. The night before they reached Melrose they slept at the little quiet inn of Clovenford, where, on mentioning his name, they were received with all sorts of attention and kindness,—the landlady observing that Mr Scott, "who was a very clever gentleman," was an old friend of the house, and

usually spent a good deal of time there during the fishing season; but, indeed, says Mr Wordsworth, "wherever we named him, we found the word acted as an *open sesamum;* and I believe that, in the character of the *Sheriff's* friends, we might have counted on a hearty welcome under any roof in the Border country."

He met them at Melrose on the 19th, and escorted them through the Abbey, pouring out his rich stores of history and tradition. They then dined together at the inn; but Miss Wordsworth observed that there was some difficulty about arranging matters for the night, "the landlady refusing to settle anything until she had ascertained from *the Sheriff himself* that he had no objection to sleep in the same room with *William.*" Scott was thus far on his way to the Circuit Court at Jedburgh, in his capacity of Sheriff, and there his new friends again joined him; but he begged that they would not enter the court, "for," said he, "I really would not like you to see the sort of figure I cut there." They did see him casually, however, in his cocked hat and sword, marching in the Judge's procession to the sound of one cracked trumpet, and were then not surprised that he should have been a little ashamed of the whole ceremonial. He introduced to them his friend William Laidlaw, who was attending the court as a juryman, and who, having read some of Wordsworth's verses in a newspaper, was exceedingly anxious to be of the party, when they explored at leisure, all the law-business being over, the beautiful valley of the Jed, and the ruins of the Castle of Fernieherst, the original fastness of the noble family of Lothian. The grove of stately ancient elms about and below the ruin was seen to great advantage in a fine, grey, breezy autumnal afternoon; and Mr Wordsworth happened to say, "What life there is in trees!"—"How different," said Scott, "was the feeling of a very intelligent young lady, born and bred in the Orkney Islands, who

lately came to spend a season in this neighbourhood! She told me nothing in the mainland scenery had so much disappointed her as woods and trees. She found them so dead and lifeless, that she could never help pining after the eternal motion and variety of the ocean. And so back she has gone, and I believe nothing will ever tempt her from *the wind-sweep Orcades* again."

Next day they proceeded up the Teviot to Hawick, Scott entertaining his friends with some legend or ballad connected with every tower or rock they passed. He made them stop to admire particularly a scene of deep and solemn retirement, called *Horne's Pool*, from its having been the daily haunt of a contemplative schoolmaster, known to him in his youth; and at Kirkton he pointed out the little village schoolhouse, to which his friend Leyden had walked six or eight miles every day across the moors, "when a poor barefooted boy." From Hawick, where they spent the night, he led them next morning to the brow of a hill, from which they could see a wide range of the Border mountains, Ruberslaw, the Carter, and the Cheviots; and lamented that neither their engagements nor his own would permit them to make at this time an excursion into the wilder glens of Liddesdale, "where," said he, "I have strolled so often and so long, that I may say I have a home in every farm-house." "And, indeed," adds Mr Wordsworth, "wherever we went with him, he seemed to know everybody, and everybody to know and like him." Here they parted,—the Wordsworths to pursue their journey homeward by Eskdale—he to return to Lasswade.

The impression on Mr Wordsworth's mind was, that on the whole he attached much less importance to his literary labours and reputation than to his bodily sports, exercises, and social amusements; and yet he spoke of his profession as if he had already given up almost all hope of rising by it; and some allusion being made to its profits, observed

that "he was sure he could, if he chose, get more money than he should ever wish to have from the booksellers."[1]

This confidence in his own literary resources appeared to Mr Wordsworth remarkable—the more so, from the careless way in which its expression dropt from him. As to his despondence concerning the Bar, I confess his *fee-book* indicates less ground for such a feeling than I should have expected to discover there. His practice brought him, as we have seen, in the session of 1796–7, L.144, 10s.;—its proceeds fell down, in the first year of his married life, to L.79, 17s.; but they rose again, in 1798–9, to L.135, 9s.; amounted, in 1799–1800, to L.129, 13s.; in 1800–1, to L.170; in 1801–2, to L.202, 12s.; and in the session that had just elapsed (which is the last included in the record before me), to L.228, 18s.

I have already said something of the beginning of Scott's acquaintance with "the Ettrick Shepherd." Shortly after their first meeting, Hogg, coming into Edinburgh with a flock of sheep, was seized with a sudden ambition of seeing himself in type, and he wrote out that same night a few ballads, already famous in the Forest, which some obscure bookseller gratified him by printing accordingly; but they appear to have attracted no notice beyond their original sphere. Hogg then made an excursion into the Highlands, in quest of employment as overseer of some extensive sheep-farm; but, though Scott had furnished him with strong recommendations to various friends, he returned without success. He printed an account of his travels, however, in a set of letters in the Scots Magazine, which, though exceedingly rugged and uncouth, had abundant traces of the native shrewdness and genuine poetical feeling

[1] I have drawn up the account of this meeting from my recollection partly of Mr Wordsworth's conversation—partly from that of his sister's charming "Diary," which he was so kind as to read over to me on the 16th May 1836.

of this remarkable man. These also failed to excite attention; but, undeterred by such disappointments, the Shepherd no sooner read the third volume of the "Minstrelsy," than he made up his mind that the Editor's "Imitations of the Ancients" were by no means what they should have been. "Immediately," he says, in one of his many memoirs of himself, "I chose a number of traditional facts, and set about imitating the manner of the ancients myself." These imitations he transmitted to Scott, who warmly praised the many striking beauties scattered over their rough surface. The next time that business carried him to Edinburgh, Scott invited him to dinner, in company with Laidlaw, who happened also to be in town, and some other admirers of the rustic genius. When Hogg entered the drawing-room, Mrs Scott, being at the time in a delicate state of health, was reclining on a sofa. The Shepherd, after being presented, and making his best bow, took possession of another sofa placed opposite to hers, and stretched himself thereupon at all his length; for, as he said afterwards, "I thought I could never do wrong to copy the lady of the house." As his dress at this period was precisely that in which any ordinary herdsman attends cattle to the market, and his hands, moreover, bore most legible marks of a recent sheep-smearing, the lady of the house did not observe with perfect equanimity the novel usage to which her chintz was exposed. The Shepherd, however, remarked nothing of all this—dined heartily and drank freely, and, by jest, anecdote, and song, afforded plentiful merriment. As the liquor operated, his familiarity increased; from Mr Scott, he advanced to "Sherra," and thence to "Scott," "Walter," and "Wattie,"—until, at supper, he fairly convulsed the whole party by addressing Mrs Scott, as "Charlotte."

The collection entitled "The Mountain Bard" was eventually published by Constable, in consequence of Scott's recommendation, and this work did at last afford Hogg no

slender share of the reputation for which he had so long thirsted. It is not my business, however, to pursue the details of his story.

"Sir Tristrem" was at length published on the 2d of May 1804, by Constable, who, however, expected so little popularity for the work, that the edition consisted only of 150 copies. These were sold at a high price (two guineas), otherwise they would not have been enough to cover the expenses of paper and printing. Mr Ellis and other friends were much dissatisfied with these arrangements; but I doubt not that Constable was a better judge than any of them. The work, however, partook in due time of the favour attending its editor's name, and had been twice reprinted before it was included in the collective editions of his poetry. It was not a performance from which he had ever anticipated any pecuniary profit, but it maintained at least, if it did not raise, his reputation in the circle of his fellow-antiquaries; and his own *Conclusion*, in the manner of the original romance, must always be admired as a specimen of skill and dexterity. As to the arguments of the Introduction, I shall not in this place attempt any discussion. Whether the story of Tristrem was first told in Welsh, Armorican, French, or English verse, there can, I think, be no doubt that it had been told in verse, with such success as to obtain very general renown, by Thomas of Ercildoune, and that the copy edited by Scott was either the composition of one who had heard the old Rhymer recite his lay, or the identical lay itself. The introduction of Thomas's name in the third person, as not the author, but the author's authority, appears to have had a great share in convincing Scott that the Auchinleck MS. contained not the original, but the copy of an English admirer and contemporary. This point seems to have been rendered more doubtful by some quotations in the recent edition of Warton's History of English Poetry; but the argument de-

rived from the enthusiastic exclamation, "God help Sir Tristrem the knight—he fought for England," still remains; and stronger perhaps even than that, in the opinion of modern philologists, is the total absence of any Scottish or even Northumbrian peculiarities in the diction. All this controversy may be waived here. Scott's object and delight was to revive the fame of the Rhymer, whose traditional history he had listened to while yet an infant among the crags of Smailholme. He had already celebrated him in a noble ballad;[1] he now devoted a volume to elucidate a fragment supposed to be substantially his work; and we shall find that thirty years after, when the lamp of his own genius was all but spent, it could still revive and throw out at least some glimmerings of its original brightness at the name of Thomas of Ercildoune.[2]

In the course of the preceding summer, the Lord-Lieutenant of Selkirkshire complained of Scott's military zeal as interfering sometimes with the discharge of his shrieval functions, and took occasion to remind him, that the law, requiring every Sheriff to reside at least four months in the year within his own jurisdiction, had not hitherto been complied with. While, in consequence of a renewal of this hint, he was seeking about for some "lodge in the Forest," his kinsman of Harden suggested that the tower of Auld Wat (the *Stammschloss* of their family) might be refitted, so as to serve his purpose; and he received the proposal with enthusiastic delight. On a more careful inspection of the localities, however, he became sensible that he would be practically at a greater distance from county business of all kinds at Harden, than if he were to continue at Lasswade. Just at this time, the house of Ashestiel, situated on the southern bank of the Tweed, a few miles from Selkirk, became vacant by the death of its proprietor, Colonel Russell, who had married a sister of

[1] See *Poetical Works* (Edition 1841), pp. 572-581.

[2] Compare the Fifth Chapter of *Castle Dangerous*.

Scott's mother, and the consequent dispersion of the family. The young Laird of Ashestiel, his cousin, was then in India; and the Sheriff took a lease of the house, with a small farm adjoining. On the 4th May, two days after the Tristrem had been published, he says to Ellis, who was meditating a northern tour—"I have been engaged in travelling backwards and forwards to Selkirkshire upon little pieces of business, just important enough to prevent my doing anything to purpose. One great matter, however, I have achieved, which is, procuring myself a place of residence, which will save me these teasing migrations in future, so that though I part with my sweet little cottage on the banks of the Esk, you will find me this summer in the very centre of the ancient Reged, in a decent farm-house overhanging the Tweed, and situated in a wild pastoral country." And again, on the 19th, he thus apologizes for not having answered a letter of the tenth:—"For more than a month my head was fairly tenanted by ideas, which, though strictly pastoral and rural, were neither literary nor poetical. *Long sheep* and *short sheep*, and *tups* and *gimmers*, and *hogs* and *dinmonts*, had made a perfect sheepfold of my understanding, which is hardly yet cleared of them.[1] I hope Mrs Ellis will clap a bridle on her imagination. Ettrick Forest boasts finely shaped hills and clear romantic streams; but, alas! they are bare to wildness, and denuded of the beautiful natural wood with which they were formerly shaded. It is mortifying to see that, though wherever the sheep are excluded, the copse has immediately sprung up in abundance, so that enclosures only are wanting to restore the wood wherever it might be useful or

[1] Hogg describes the amusement of the Sheriff in 1801, upon hearing a discussion on the meaning of long sheep and short sheep (so called according to the length of the fleece); and adds—"When I saw the very same words repeated near the beginning (p. 4) of the *Black Dwarf*, how could I be mistaken of the author?"—*Autobiography* prefixed to *Altrive Tales*.

ornamental, yet hardly a proprietor has attempted to give it fair play for a resurrection."

On the 10th of June 1804, died, at his seat of Rosebank, Captain Robert Scott, the affectionate uncle whose name has often occurred in this narrative. "He was," says his nephew to Ellis, on the 18th, "a man of universal benevolence and great kindness towards his friends, and to me individually. His manners were so much tinged with the habits of celibacy as to render them peculiar, though by no means unpleasingly so, and his profession (that of a seaman) gave a high colouring to the whole. The loss is one which, though the course of nature led me to expect it, did not take place at last without considerable pain to my feelings. The arrangement of his affairs, and the distribution of his small fortune among his relations, will devolve in a great measure upon me. He has distinguished me by leaving me a beautiful little villa on the banks of the Tweed, with every possible convenience annexed to it, and about thirty acres of the finest land in Scotland. Notwithstanding, however, the temptation that this bequest offers, I continue to pursue my Reged plan, and expect to be settled at Ashestiel in the course of a month. Rosebank is situated so near the village of Kelso, as hardly to be sufficiently a country residence; besides, it is hemmed in by hedges and ditches, not to mention Dukes and Lady Dowagers, which are bad things for little people. It is expected to sell to great advantage. I shall buy a mountain farm with the purchase-money, and be quite the Laird of the Cairn and the Scaur."

Scott sold Rosebank in the course of the year for L.5000. This bequest made an important change in his pecuniary position, and influenced accordingly the arrangements of his future life. Independently of practice at the Bar, and of literary profits, he was now, with his little patrimony, his Sheriffship, and about L.200 per annum arising from the

stock ultimately settled on his wife, in possession of a fixed revenue of nearly L.1000 a-year.

Ashestiel will be visited by many for his sake, as long as Waverley and Marmion are remembered. A more beautiful situation for the residence of a poet could not be conceived. The house was then a small one, but, compared with the cottage at Lasswade, its accommodations were amply sufficient. You approached it through an old-fashioned garden, with holly hedges, and broad, green, terrace walks. On one side, close under the windows, is a deep ravine, clothed with venerable trees, down which a mountain rivulet is heard, more than seen, in its progress to the Tweed. The river itself is separated from the high bank on which the house stands only by a narrow meadow of the richest verdure. Opposite, and all around, are the green hills. The valley there is narrow, and the aspect in every direction is that of perfect pastoral repose. The heights immediately behind are those which divide the Tweed from the Yarrow; and the latter celebrated stream lies within an easy ride, in the course of which the traveller passes through a variety of the finest mountain scenery in the south of Scotland. No town is within seven miles but Selkirk, which was then still smaller and quieter than it is now; there was hardly even a gentleman's family within visiting distance, except at Yair, a few miles lower on the Tweed, the ancient seat of the Pringles of Whytbank, and at Bowhill, between the Yarrow and Ettrick, where the Earl of Dalkeith used occasionally to inhabit a small shooting-lodge, which has since grown into a ducal residence. The country all around, with here and there an insignificant exception, belongs to the Buccleuch estate; so that, whichever way he chose to turn, the bard of the clan had ample room and verge enough for every variety of field sport; and being then in the prime vigour of manhood, he was not slow to profit by

these advantages. Meantime, the concerns of his own little farm, and the care of his absent relation's woods, gave him healthful occupation in the intervals of the chase; and he had long, solitary evenings for the uninterrupted exercise of his pen; perhaps, on the whole, better opportunities of study than he had ever enjoyed before, or was to meet with elsewhere in later days.

When he first examined Ashestiel, with a view to being his cousin's tenant, he thought of taking home James Hogg to superintend the sheep-farm, and keep watch over the house also during the winter. I am not able to tell exactly in what manner this proposal fell to the ground; but in truth the Sheriff had hardly been a week in possession of his new domains, before he made acquaintance with a character much better suited to his purpose than James Hogg ever could have been. I mean honest Thomas Purdie, his faithful servant—his affectionately devoted humble friend from this time until death parted them. Tom was first brought before him, in his capacity of Sheriff, on a charge of poaching, when the poor fellow gave such a touching account of his circumstances,—a wife, and I know not how many children, depending on his exertions—work scarce and grouse abundant,—and all this with a mixture of odd sly humour,—that the Sheriff's heart was moved. Tom escaped the penalty of the law—was taken into employment as shepherd, and shewed such zeal, activity, and shrewdness in that capacity, that Scott never had any occasion to repent of the step he soon afterwards took, in promoting him to the position which had been originally offered to James Hogg.

It was also about the same time that he took into his service as coachman Peter Mathieson, brother-in-law to Thomas Purdie, another faithful servant, who never afterwards left him, and still (1848) survives his kind master. Scott's awkward management of the little phaeton had exposed his wife to more than one perilous overturn, before he

agreed to set up a close carriage, and call in the assistance of this steady charioteer.

During this autumn Scott formed the personal acquaintance of Mungo Park, the celebrated victim of African discovery. On his return from his first expedition, Park endeavoured to establish himself as a medical practitioner in the town of Hawick, but the drudgeries of that calling in such a district soon exhausted his ardent temper, and he was now living in seclusion in his native cottage at Fowlsheils on the Yarrow, nearly opposite Newark Castle. His brother, Archibald Park (then tenant of a large farm on the Buccleuch estate), a man remarkable for strength both of mind and body, introduced the traveller to the Sheriff. They soon became much attached to each other; and Scott supplied some interesting anecdotes of their brief intercourse to Mr Wishaw, the editor of Park's Posthumous Journal, with which I shall blend a few minor circumstances, gathered from him in conversation long afterwards. "On one occasion," he says, "the traveller communicated some very remarkable adventures which had befallen him in Africa, but which he had not recorded in his book." On Scott's asking the cause of this silence, Mungo answered, "That in all cases where he had information to communicate, which he thought of importance to the public, he had stated the facts boldly, leaving it to his readers to give such credit to his statements as they might appear justly to deserve; but that he would not shock their faith, or render his travels more marvellous, by introducing circumstances, which, however true, were of little or no moment, as they related solely to his own personal adventures and escapes." This reply struck Scott as highly characteristic of the man; and though strongly tempted to set down some of these marvels for Mr Wishaw's use, he on reflection abstained from doing so, holding it unfair to record what the adventurer had deliberately chosen to suppress in his own narrative. He con-

firms the account given by Park's biographer of his cold and reserved manners to strangers; and, in particular, of his disgust with the *indirect* questions which curious visiters would often put to him upon the subject of his travels. "This practice," said Mungo, "exposes me to two risks; either that I may not understand the questions meant to be put, or that my answers to them may be misconstrued;" and he contrasted such conduct with the frankness of Scott's revered friend, Dr Adam Ferguson, who, the very first day the traveller dined with him at Hallyards, spread a large map of Africa on the table, and made him trace out his progress thereupon, inch by inch, questioning him minutely as to every step he had taken. "Here, however," says Scott, "Dr F. was using a privilege to which he was well entitled by his venerable age and high literary character, but which could not have been exercised with propriety by any common stranger."

Calling one day at Fowlsheils, and not finding Park at home, Scott walked in search of him along the banks of the Yarrow, which in that neighbourhood passes over various ledges of rock, forming deep pools and eddies between them. Presently he discovered his friend standing alone on the bank, plunging one stone after another into the water, and watching anxiously the bubbles as they rose to the surface. "This," said Scott, "appears but an idle amusement for one who has seen so much stirring adventure." "Not so idle, perhaps, as you suppose," answered Mungo:—"This was the manner in which I used to ascertain the depth of a river in Africa before I ventured to cross it—judging whether the attempt would be safe, by the time the bubbles of air took to ascend." At this time Park's intention of a second expedition had never been revealed to Scott; but he instantly formed the opinion that these experiments on Yarrow were connected with some such purpose.

His thoughts had always continued to be haunted with

Africa. He told Scott, that whenever he awoke suddenly in the night, owing to a nervous disorder with which he was troubled, he fancied himself still a prisoner in the tent of Ali; but when the poet expressed some surprise that he should design again to revisit those scenes, he answered, that he would rather brave Africa and all its horrors, than wear out his life in long and toilsome rides over the hills of Scotland, for which the remuneration was hardly enough to keep soul and body together.

Towards the end of the autumn, when about to quit his country for the last time, Park paid Scott a farewell visit, and slept at Ashestiel. Next morning his host accompanied him homewards over the wild chain of hills between the Tweed and the Yarrow. Park talked much of his new scheme, and mentioned his determination to tell his family that he had some business for a day or two in Edinburgh, and send them his blessing from thence, without returning to take leave. He had married, not long before, a pretty and amiable woman, and when they reached the *Williamhope ridge*, "the autumnal mist floating heavily and slowly down the valley of the Yarrow," presented to Scott's imagination "a striking emblem of the troubled and uncertain prospect which his undertaking afforded." He remained, however, unshaken, and at length they reached the spot at which they had agreed to separate. A small ditch divided the moor from the road, and in going over it, Park's horse stumbled, and nearly fell. "I am afraid, Mungo," said the Sheriff, "that is a bad omen." To which he answered, smiling, "*Freits* (omens) follow those who look to them." With this expression Mungo struck the spurs into his horse, and Scott never saw him again. His parting proverb, by the way, was probably suggested by one of the Border ballads, in which species of lore he was almost as great a proficient as the Sheriff himself; for we read in "Edom o' Gordon,"—

> "Them look to freits, my master dear,
> Then freits will follow them."

The brother of Mungo Park remained in Scott's neighbourhood for some years, and was frequently his companion in his mountain rides. Though a man of the most dauntless temperament, he was often alarmed at Scott's reckless horsemanship. "The de'il's in ye, Sherra," he would say; "ye'll never halt till they bring you hame with your feet foremost." He rose greatly in favour, in consequence of the gallantry with which he assisted the Sheriff in seizing a gipsy, accused of murder, from amidst a group of similar desperadoes, on whom they had come unexpectedly in a desolate part of the country.

To return to the Lay of the Last Minstrel: Ellis, understanding it to be now nearly ready for the press, writes to Scott, urging him to set it forth with some engraved illustrations—if possible, after Flaxman, whose splendid designs from Homer had shortly before made their appearance. He answers, August 21—"I should fear Flaxman's genius is too classic to stoop to body forth my Gothic Borderers. Would there not be some risk of their resembling the antique of Homer's heroes, rather than the iron race of Salvator? I should like at least to be at his elbow when at work. I wish very much I could have sent you the Lay while in MS., to have had the advantage of your opinion and corrections. But Ballantyne galled my kibes so severely during an unusual fit of activity, that I gave him the whole story in a sort of pet both with him and with it."

There is a circumstance which must already have struck such of my readers as knew the author in his latter days, namely, the readiness with which he seems to have communicated this poem, in its progress, not only to his own familiar friends, but to new and casual acquaintances. We shall find him following the same course with his Marmion—but not, I think, with any of his subsequent works. His determination to consult the movements of his own mind alone in the conduct of his pieces, was probably taken before he began the Lay; and he soon resolved to trust

for the detection of minor inaccuracies to two persons only —James Ballantyne and William Erskine. The printer was himself a man of considerable literary talents: his own style had the incurable faults of pomposity and affectation; but his eye for more venial errors in the writings of others was quick, and, though his personal address was apt to give a stranger the impression of insincerity, he was in reality an honest man, and conveyed his mind on such matters with equal candour and delicacy during the whole of Scott's brilliant career. In the vast majority of instances he found his friend acquiesce at once in the propriety of his suggestions; nay, there certainly were cases, though rare, in which his advice to alter things of much more consequence than a word or a rhyme, was frankly tendered, and on deliberation adopted by Scott. Mr Erskine was the referee whenever the poet hesitated about taking the hints of the zealous typographer; and his refined taste and gentle manners rendered his critical alliance highly valuable. With two such faithful friends within his reach, the author of the Lay might safely dispense with sending his MS. to be revised even by George Ellis.

In the first week of January 1805, "The Lay" was published; and its success at once decided that literature should form the main business of Scott's life. I shall not mock the reader with many words as to the merits of a poem which has now kept its place for nearly half a century; but one or two additional remarks on the history of the composition may be pardoned.

It is curious to trace the small beginnings and gradual development of his design. The lovely Countess of Dalkeith hears a wild rude legend of Border *diablerie*, and sportively asks him to make it the subject of a ballad. He had been already labouring in the elucidation of the "quaint Inglis" ascribed to an ancient seer and bard of the same district, and perhaps completed his own sequel, intending the whole to be included in the third volume of

the Minstrelsy. He assents to Lady Dalkeith's request, and casts about for some new variety of diction and rhyme, which might be adopted without impropriety in a closing strain for the same collection. Sir John Stoddart's casual recitation, a year or two before, of Coleridge's unpublished Christabel, had fixed the music of that noble fragment in his memory; and it occurs to him, that by throwing the story of Gilpin Horner into somewhat of a similar cadence, he might produce such an echo of the later metrical romance, as would serve to connect his *Conclusion* of the primitive Sir Tristrem with his imitations of the common popular ballad in the Grey Brother and Eve of St John. A single scene of feudal festivity in the hall of Branksome, disturbed by some pranks of a nondescript goblin, was probably all that he contemplated; but his accidental confinement in the midst of a volunteer camp gave him leisure to meditate his theme to the sound of the bugle;—and suddenly there flashes on him the idea of extending his simple outline, so as to embrace a vivid panorama of that old Border life of war and tumult, and all earnest passions, with which his researches on the "Minstrelsy" had by degrees fed his imagination, until even the minutest feature had been taken home and realized with unconscious intenseness of sympathy; so that he had won for himself in the past, another world, hardly less complete or familiar than the present. Erskine or Cranstoun suggests that he would do well to divide the poem into cantos, and prefix to each of them a motto explanatory of the action, after the fashion of Spenser in the Faery Queen. He pauses for a moment—and the happiest conception of the framework of a picturesque narrative that ever occurred to any poet—one that Homer might have envied—the creation of the ancient harper, starts to life. By such steps did the Lay of the Last Minstrel grow out of the Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border.

A word more of its felicitous machinery. It was at Bow-

hill that the Countess of Dalkeith requested a ballad on Gilpin Horner. The ruined castle of Newark closely adjoins that seat, and is now indeed included within its *pleasance.* Newark had been the chosen residence of the first Duchess of Buccleuch, and he accordingly shadows out his own beautiful friend in the person of her lord's ancestress, the last of the original stock of that great house; himself the favoured inmate of Bowhill, introduced certainly to the familiarity of its circle in consequence of his devotion to the poetry of a by-past age, in that of an aged minstrel, "the last of all the race," seeking shelter at the gate of Newark, in days when many an adherent of the fallen cause of Stuart,—his own bearded ancestor, *who had fought at Killiecrankie*, among the rest,—owed their safety to her who

> "In pride of power, in beauty's bloom,
> Had wept o'er Monmouth's bloody tomb."

The arch allusions which run through all these *Introductions*, without in the least interrupting the truth and graceful pathos of their main impression, seem to me exquisitely characteristic of Scott, whose delight and pride was to play with the genius which nevertheless mastered him at will. For, in truth, what is it that gives to all his works their unique and marking charm, except the matchless effect which sudden effusions of the purest heart-blood of nature derive from their being poured out, to all appearance involuntarily, amidst diction and sentiment cast equally in the mould of the busy world, and the seemingly habitual desire to dwell on nothing but what might be likely to excite curiosity, without too much disturbing deeper feelings, in the saloons of polished life? Such outbursts come forth dramatically in all his writings; but in the interludes and passionate parentheses of the Lay of the Last Minstrel we have the poet's own inner soul and temperament laid bare and throbbing before us. Even here,

indeed, he has a mask, and he trusts it—but fortunately it is a transparent one.

Many minor personal allusions have been explained in the notes to the last edition of the Lay. It was hardly necessary even then to say that the choice of the hero had been dictated by the poet's affection for the living descendants of the Baron of Cranstoun; and now—none who have perused the preceding pages can doubt that he had dressed out his Margaret of Branksome in the form and features of his own first love. This poem may be considered as the "bright consummate flower" in which all the dearest dreams of his youthful fancy had at length found expansion for their strength, spirit, tenderness, and beauty.

In the closing lines—

> "Hush'd is the harp—the Minstrel gone;
> And did he wander forth alone? . . . . .
> No!—close beneath proud Newark's tower
> Arose the Minstrel's humble bower," &c.

—in these charming lines he has embodied what was, at the time when he penned them, the chief day-dream of Ashestiel. From the moment that his uncle's death placed a considerable sum of ready money at his command, he pleased himself, as we have seen, with the idea of buying a mountain farm, and becoming not only the "sheriff" (as he had in former days delighted to call himself), but "the *laird* of the cairn and the scaur." While he was "labouring *doucement* at the Lay" (as in one of his letters he expresses it), during the recess of 1804, circumstances rendered it next to certain that the small estate of *Broadmeadows*, situated just over against the ruins of Newark, on the northern bank of the Yarrow, would soon be exposed to sale; and many a time did he ride round it in company with Lord and Lady Dalkeith,

> "When summer smiled on sweet Bowhill,"

surveying the beautiful little domain with wistful eyes, and anticipating that

> "*There* would he sing achievement high
> And circumstance of chivalry,
> And Yarrow, as he rolled along,
> Bear burden to the Minstrel's song."

I consider it as, in one point of view, the greatest misfortune of his life that this vision was not realized; but the success of the poem itself changed "the spirit of his dream." The favour which it at once attained had not been equalled in the case of any one poem of considerable length during at least two generations: it certainly had not been approached in the case of any narrative poem since the days of Dryden. Before it was sent to the press it had received warm commendation from the ablest and most influential critic of the time; but when Mr Jeffrey's reviewal appeared, a month after publication, laudatory as its language was, it scarcely came up to the opinion which had already taken root in the public mind. It, however, quite satisfied the author; and I think it just to state, that I have not discovered in any of the letters which he received from brother-poets—no, not even in those of Wordsworth or Campbell—a strain of approbation higher, on the whole, than that of the chief professional reviewer of the period. When the happy days of youth are over, even the most genial and generous of minds are seldom able to enter into the strains of a new poet with that full and open delight which he awakens in the bosoms of the rising generation about him. Their deep and eager sympathies have already been drawn upon to an extent of which the prosaic part of the species can never have any conception; and when the fit of creative inspiration has subsided, they are apt to be rather cold critics even of their own noblest appeals to the simple primary feelings of their kind.

"It would be great affectation," says the Introduction of 1830, "not to own that the author expected some success from the Lay of the Last Minstrel. The attempt to return to a more simple and natural poetry was likely to

be welcomed, at a time when the public had become tired of heroic hexameters, with all the buckram and binding that belong to them in modern days. But whatever might have been his expectations, whether moderate or unreasonable, the result left them far behind; for among those who smiled on the adventurous minstrel were numbered the great names of William Pitt and Charles Fox. Neither was the extent of the sale inferior to the character of the judges who received the poem with approbation. Upwards of 30,000 copies were disposed of by the trade; and the author had to perform a task difficult to human vanity, when called upon to make the necessary deductions from his own merits, in a calm attempt to account for its popularity."

Through what channel or in what terms Fox made known his opinion of the Lay, I have failed to ascertain. Pitt's praise, as expressed to his niece, Lady Hester Stanhope, within a few weeks after the poem appeared, was repeated by her to William Rose, who, of course, communicated it forthwith to the author; and not long after, the Minister, in conversation with Scott's early friend William Dundas, signified that it would give him pleasure to find some opportunity of advancing the fortunes of such a writer. "I remember," writes this gentleman, "at Mr Pitt's table in 1805, the Chancellor asked me about you and your then situation, and after I had answered him, Mr Pitt observed—'He can't remain as he is,' and desired me to 'look to it.' He then repeated some lines from the Lay, describing the old harper's embarrassment when asked to play, and said—'This is a sort of thing which I might have expected in painting, but could never have fancied capable of being given in poetry.'"—It is agreeable to know that this great statesman and accomplished scholar awoke at least once from his supposed apathy as to the elegant literature of his own time.

The poet has under-estimated even the patent and tan-

gible evidence of his success. The first edition of the Lay was a magnificent quarto, 750 copies; but this was soon exhausted, and there followed one octavo impression after another in close succession to the number of fourteen. In fact, some forty-four thousand copies had been disposed of in this country, and by the legitimate trade alone, before he superintended the edition of 1830, to which his biographical introductions were prefixed. In the history of British Poetry nothing had ever equalled the demand for the Lay of the Last Minstrel.

The publishers of the first edition were Longman and Co. of London, and Archibald Constable and Co. of Edinburgh; which last house, however, had but a small share in the adventure. The profits were to be divided equally between the author and his publishers; and Scott's moiety was £169, 6s. Messrs Longman, when a second edition was called for, offered £500 for the copyright; this was accepted; but they afterwards, as the Introduction says, "added £100 in their own unsolicited kindness. It was handsomely given, to supply the loss of a fine horse which broke down suddenly while the author was riding with one of the worthy publishers." The author's whole share, then, in the profits of the Lay, came to £769, 6s.

Mr Ballantyne, in his Memorandum, says, that very shortly after the publication of the Lay, he found himself obliged to apply to Mr Scott for an advance of money; his own capital being inadequate for the business which had been accumulated on his press, in consequence of the reputation it had acquired for beauty and correctness of execution. Already, as we have seen, the printer had received "a liberal loan;"—"and now," says he, "being compelled, maugre all delicacy, to renew my application, he candidly answered that he was not quite sure that it would be prudent for him to comply, but in order to evince his entire confidence in me, he was willing to make a suitable advance to be admitted as a third-sharer of my business."

No trace has been discovered of any examination into the state of the business, on the part of Scott, at this time. However, he now embarked in Ballantyne's concern almost the whole of the capital which he had a few months before designed to invest in the purchase of Broadmeadows. *Dis aliter visum.*

I have hinted my suspicion that he had formed some distant notion of such an alliance, as early as the date of Ballantyne's projected removal from Kelso; and his Introduction to the Lay, in 1830, appears to leave little doubt that the hope of ultimately succeeding at the Bar had waxed very faint, before the third volume of the Minstrelsy was brought out in 1803. When that hope ultimately vanished altogether, perhaps he himself would not have found it easy to tell. The most important of men's opinions, views, and projects, are sometimes taken up in so very gradual a manner, and after so many pauses of hesitation and of inward retractation, that they themselves are at a loss to trace in retrospect all the stages through which their minds have passed. We see plainly that Scott had never been fond of his profession, but that, conscious of his own persevering diligence, he ascribed his scanty success in it mainly to the prejudices of the Scotch solicitors against employing, in weighty causes at least, any barrister supposed to be strongly imbued with the love of literature; instancing the career of his friend Jeffrey as almost the solitary instance within his experience of such prejudices being entirely overcome. Had Scott, to his strong sense and dexterous ingenuity, his well-grounded knowledge of the jurisprudence of his country, and his admirable industry, added a brisk and ready talent for debate and declamation, I can have no doubt that his triumph must have been as complete as Mr Jeffrey's; nor in truth do I much question that, had one really great and interesting case been submitted to his sole management, the result would have been to place his professional character for skill and judgment, and variety of resource, on

so firm a basis, that even his rising celebrity as a man of letters could not have seriously disturbed it. Nay, I think it quite possible, that had he been intrusted with one such case after his reputation was established, and he had been compelled to do his abilities some measure of justice in his own secret estimate, he might have displayed very considerable powers even as a forensic speaker. But no opportunities of this engaging kind having ever been presented to him—after he had persisted for more than ten years in sweeping the floor of the Parliament House, without meeting with any employment but what would have suited the dullest drudge, and seen himself termly and yearly more and more distanced by contemporaries for whose general capacity he could have had little respect—while, at the same time, he already felt his own position in the eyes of society at large to have been signally elevated in consequence of his extra-professional exertions—it is not wonderful that disgust should have gradually gained upon him, and that the sudden blaze and tumult of renown which surrounded the author of the Lay should have at last determined him to concentrate all his ambition on the pursuits which had alone brought him distinction.

We have seen that, before he formed his contract with Ballantyne, he was in possession of such a fixed income as might have satisfied all his desires, had he not found his family increasing rapidly about him. Even as that was, with nearly if not quite £1000 per annum, he might perhaps have retired not only from the Bar, but from Edinburgh, and settled entirely at Ashestiel or Broadmeadows, without encountering what any man of his station and habits ought to have considered as an imprudent risk. He had, however, no wish to cut himself off from the busy and intelligent society to which he had been hitherto accustomed; and resolved not to leave the Bar until he should have at least used his best efforts for obtaining, in addition to his Shrievalty, one of those Clerkships of the Supreme Court,

which are usually considered as honourable retirements for advocates who, at a certain standing, give up all hopes of reaching the Bench. "I determined," he says, "that literature should be my staff but not my crutch, and that the profits of my literary labour, however convenient otherwise, should not, if I could help it, become necessary to my ordinary expenses. Upon such a post an author might hope to retreat, without any perceptible alteration of circumstances, whenever the time should arrive that the public grew weary of his endeavours to please, or he himself should tire of the pen. I possessed so many friends capable of assisting me in this object of ambition, that I could hardly overrate my own prospects of obtaining the preferment to which I limited my wishes; and, in fact, I obtained, in no long period, the reversion of a situation which completely met them." [1]

The first notice of this affair that occurs in his correspondence, is in a note of Lord Dalkeith's, February 2, 1805, in which his noble friend says—"My father desires me to tell you that he has had a communication with Lord Melville within these few days, and that he thinks *your business in a good train, though not certain.*" I consider it as clear, then, that he began his negotiations about a seat at the clerk's table immediately after the Lay was published; and this in the strictest connection with his trading adventure. His design of quitting the Bar was divulged, however, to none but those immediately necessary to his negotiation with the Government; and the nature of his alliance with the printing establishment remained, I believe, not only unknown, but for some years wholly unsuspected, by any of his daily companions except Erskine.

The forming of this commercial tie was one of the most important steps in Scott's life. He continued bound by it during twenty years, and its influence on his literary exertions and his worldly fortunes was productive of much good

[1] Introduction to the Lay of the Last Minstrel—1830.

and not a little evil. Its effects were in truth so mixed and balanced during the vicissitudes of a long and vigorous career, that I at this moment doubt whether it ought, on the whole, to be considered with more of satisfaction or of regret.

With what zeal he proceeded in advancing the views of the new copartnership, his correspondence bears ample evidence. The brilliant and captivating genius, now acknowledged universally, was soon discovered by the leading booksellers of the time to be united with such abundance of matured information in many departments, and, above all, with such indefatigable habits, as to mark him out for the most valuable workman they could engage for the furtherance of their schemes. He had, long before this, cast a shrewd and penetrating eye over the field of literary enterprise, and developed in his own mind the outlines of many extensive plans, which wanted nothing but the command of a sufficient body of able subalterns to be carried into execution with splendid success. Such of these as he grappled with in his own person were, with rare exceptions, carried to a triumphant conclusion; but the alliance with Ballantyne soon infected him with the proverbial rashness of mere mercantile adventure—while, at the same time, his generous feelings for other men of letters, and his characteristic propensity to overrate their talents, combined to hurry him and his friends into a multitude of arrangements, the results of which were often extremely embarrassing, and ultimately, in the aggregate, all but disastrous. It is an old saying, that wherever there is a secret there must be something wrong; and dearly did he pay the penalty for the mystery in which he had chosen to involve this transaction. It was his rule, from the beginning, that whatever he wrote or edited must be printed at that press; and had he catered for it only as author and sole editor, all had been well; but had the booksellers known his direct pecuniary interest in keeping up and extending the occupation of those types, they would have

taken into account his lively imagination and sanguine temperament, as well as his taste and judgment, and considered, far more deliberately than they too often did, his multifarious recommendations of new literary schemes, coupled though these were with some dim understanding that, if the Ballantyne press were employed, his own literary skill would be at his friend's disposal for the general superintendence of the undertaking. On the other hand, Scott's suggestions were, in many cases, perhaps in the majority of them, conveyed through Ballantyne, whose habitual deference to his opinion induced him to advocate them with enthusiastic zeal; and the printer, who had thus pledged his personal authority for the merits of the proposed scheme, must have felt himself committed to the bookseller, and could hardly refuse with decency to take a certain share of the pecuniary risk, by allowing the time and method of his own payment to be regulated according to the employer's convenience. Hence, by degrees, was woven a web of entanglement from which neither Ballantyne nor his adviser had any means of escape, except only in that indomitable spirit, the mainspring of personal industry altogether unparalleled, to which, thus set in motion, the world owes its most gigantic monument of literary genius.

In the very first letter that I have found from Scott to his *partner* (April 12, 1805), occur suggestions about new editions of Thomson, Dryden, and Tacitus, and, moreover, of a general edition of the British Poets, in one hundred volumes 8vo, of which last he designed to be himself the editor, and expected that the booksellers would readily give him 30 guineas per volume for his trouble. This gigantic scheme interfered with one of the general body of London publishers, and broke down accordingly; but Constable entered with zeal into the plan of a Dryden, and Scott without delay busied himself in the collection of materials for its elucidation.

Precisely at the time when his poetical ambition had been stimulated by the first outburst of universal applause, and when he was forming these engagements with Ballantyne, a fresh impetus was given to the volunteer mania, by the appointment of the Earl of Moira (afterwards Marquis of Hastings) to the chief military command in the north. The Earl had married, the year before, a Scottish Peeress, the Countess of Loudon, and entered with great zeal into her sympathy with the patriotic enthusiasm of her countrymen. Edinburgh was converted into a camp: besides a large garrison of regular troops, nearly 10,000 fencibles and volunteers were almost constantly under arms. The lawyer wore his uniform under his gown; the shopkeeper measured out his wares in scarlet; in short, the citizens of all classes made more use for several months of the military than of any other dress; and the new commander-in-chief consulted equally his own gratification and theirs, by devising a succession of manœuvres which presented a vivid image of the art of war conducted on a large and scientific scale. In the *sham battles* and *sham sieges* of 1805, Craigmillar, Gilmerton, Braidhills, and other formidable positions in the neighbourhood of Edinburgh, were the scenes of many a dashing assault and resolute defence; and occasionally the spirits of the mock combatants—English and Scotch, or Lowland and Highland—became so much excited, that there was some difficulty in preventing the rough mockery of warfare from passing into its realities. The Highlanders, in particular, were very hard to be dealt with; and once, at least, Lord Moira was forced to alter at the eleventh hour his programme of battle, because a battalion of kilted fencibles could not or would not understand that it was their duty to be beat. Such days as these must have been more nobly spirit-stirring than even the best specimens of the fox-chase. To the end of his life, Scott delighted to recall the details of their countermarches, ambuscades, charges, and pursuits, and in all of these his

associates of the Light-Horse agree that none figured more advantageously than himself. Yet such military interludes seem only to have whetted his appetite for closet work. Indeed, nothing but a complete publication of his letters could give an adequate notion of the facility with which he even at this early period combined the conscientious magistrate, the martinet quartermaster, the speculative printer, and the ardent lover of literature for its own sake.

In the course of the summer and autumn of 1805, we find him in correspondence about another gigantic scheme —an uniform series of the Ancient English Chronicles; and there are hints of various minor undertakings in the editorial line. In the same year he contributed to Mr Jeffrey's journal an admirable article on Todd's edition of Spenser; another on Godwin's Fleetwood; a third, on the Highland Society's Report concerning the poems of Ossian; a fourth, on Johnes's Translation of Froissart; a fifth, on Colonel Thornton's Sporting Tour; and a sixth, on some cookery books—the two last being excellent specimens of his humour. By September, meanwhile, he had made considerable progress with his Dryden: for we find him then writing to Ellis:—"I will not castrate John Dryden. I would as soon castrate my own father, as I believe Jupiter did of yore. What would you say to any man who would castrate Shakspeare, or Massinger, or Beaumont and Fletcher? I don't say but that it may be very proper to select correct passages for the use of boarding schools and colleges, being sensible no improper ideas can be suggested in these seminaries, unless they are intruded or smuggled under the beards and ruffs of our old dramatists. But in making an edition of a man of genius's works for libraries and collections, and such I conceive a complete edition of Dryden to be, I must give my author as I find him, and will not tear out the page, even to get rid of the blot, little as I like it. Are not the pages of Swift, and even of Pope, larded with indecency, and

often of the most disgusting kind? and do we not see them upon all shelves and dressing-tables, and in all boudoirs? Is not Prior the most indecent of tale-tellers, not even excepting La Fontaine? and how often do we see his works in female hands? In fact, it is not passages of ludicrous indelicacy that corrupt the manners of a people—it is the sonnets which a prurient genius like Master Little sings *virginibus puerisque*—it is the sentimental slang, half lewd, half methodistic, that debauches the understanding, inflames the sleeping passions, and prepares the reader to give way as soon as a tempter appears. At the same time, I am not at all happy when I peruse some of Dryden's comedies: they are very stupid, as well as indelicate; —sometimes, however, there is a considerable vein of liveliness and humour, and all of them present extraordinary pictures of the age in which he lived. My critical notes will not be very numerous, but I hope to illustrate the political poems, as Absalom and Achitophel, the Hind and Panther, &c., with some curious annotations. I have already made a complete search among some hundred pamphlets of that pamphlet-writing age, and with considerable success, as I have found several which throw light on my author."

But there is yet another important item to be included in the list of his literary labours of this year. The General Preface to his Novels informs us, that "about 1805" he wrote the opening chapters of Waverley; and the second title, *'Tis Sixty Years Since*, selected, as he says, "that the actual date of publication might correspond with the period in which the scene was laid," leaves no doubt that he had begun the work so early in 1805 as to contemplate publishing it before Christmas.[1] He adds, in the same page, that he was induced, by the favourable

[1] I have ascertained, since this page was written, that a small part of the MS. of *Waverley* is on paper bearing the watermark of 1805—the rest on paper of 1813.

reception of the Lady of the Lake, to think of giving some of his recollections of Highland Scenery and customs in prose; but this is only one instance of the inaccuracy as to matters of date which pervades all those delightful Prefaces. The Lady of the Lake was not published until five years after the first chapters of Waverley were written; its success, therefore, could have had no share in suggesting the original design of a Highland novel, though no doubt it principally influenced him to take up that design after it had been long suspended, and almost forgotten.

"Having proceeded," he says, "as far as I think the seventh chapter, I shewed my work to a critical friend, whose opinion was unfavourable; and having then some poetical reputation, I was unwilling to risk the loss of it by attempting a new style of composition. I, therefore, then threw aside the work I had commenced, without either reluctance or remonstrance. I ought to add, that though my ingenuous friend's sentence was afterwards reversed, on an appeal to the public, it cannot be considered as any imputation on his good taste; for the specimen subjected to his criticism did not extend beyond the departure of the hero for Scotland, and consequently had not entered upon the part of the story which was finally found most interesting." It is, I think, evident from a letter of 1810, that the first critic of the opening chapters of Waverley was William Erskine.

His correspondence shews how largely he was exerting himself all this while in the service of authors less fortunate than himself. James Hogg, among others, continued to occupy from time to time his attention; and he assisted regularly and assiduously throughout this and the succeeding year Mr Robert Jameson, an industrious and intelligent antiquary, who had engaged in editing a collection of ancient popular ballads before the third volume of the Minstrelsy appeared, and who at length published his very curious work in 1807. Meantime, Ashestiel, in place of

being less resorted to by literary strangers than Lasswade cottage had been, shared abundantly in the fresh attractions of the Lay, and "booksellers in the plural number" were preceded and followed by an endless variety of tourists, whose main temptation from the south had been the hope of seeing the Borders in company with their Minstrel. One of this year's guests was Mr Southey—their first meeting, the commencement of much kind intercourse. Scott still writes of himself as "idling away his hours;" he had already learned to appear as if he were doing so to all who had no particular right to confidence respecting the details of his privacy.

Mr Skene arrived just after a great storm and flood in August; he says in his *Memoranda*— "The ford of Ashestiel was never a good one, and for some time after this it remained not a little perilous. Scott was himself the first to attempt the passage on his favourite black horse *Captain*, who had scarcely entered the river when he plunged beyond his depth, and had to swim to the other side with his burden. It requires a good horseman to swim a deep and rapid stream, but he trusted to the vigour of his steady trooper, and in spite of his lameness kept his seat manfully."

Mr Skene soon discovered a change which had recently been made in his friend's distribution of his time. Previously it had been his custom, whenever professional business or social engagements occupied the middle part of his day, to seize some hours for study after he was supposed to have retired to bed. His physician suggested that this was very likely to aggravate his nervous headaches, the only malady he was subject to in the prime of his manhood; and, contemplating with steady eye a course not only of unremitting but of increasing industry, he resolved to reverse his plan. In short he had now adopted the habits in which, with slender variation, he ever after persevered when in the country. He rose by five o'clock, lit his own fire when the season required one, and shaved and dressed

with great deliberation—for he was a very martinet as to all but the mere coxcombries of the toilet, not abhorring effeminate dandyism itself so cordially as the slightest approach to personal slovenliness, or even those "bed-gown and slipper tricks," as he called them, in which literary men are so apt to indulge. Clad in his shooting-jacket, or whatever dress he meant to use till dinner time, he was seated at his desk by six o'clock, all his papers arranged before him in the most accurate order, and his books of reference marshalled around him on the floor, while at least one favourite dog lay watching his eye, just beyond the line of circumvallation. Thus, by the time the family assembled for breakfast between nine and ten, he had done enough (in his own language) "*to break the neck of the day's work.*" After breakfast, a couple of hours more were given to his solitary tasks, and by noon he was, as he used to say, "his own man." When the weather was bad, he would labour incessantly all the morning; but the general rule was to be out and on horseback by one o'clock at the latest; while, if any more distant excursion had been proposed over night, he was ready to start on it by ten; his occasional rainy days of unintermitted study forming, as he said, a fund in his favour, out of which he was entitled to draw for accommodation whenever the sun shone with special brightness.

It was another rule, that every letter he received should be answered that same day. Nothing else could have enabled him to keep abreast with the flood of communications that in the sequel put his good nature to the severest test —but already the demands on him in this way also were numerous; and he included attention to them among the necessary business which must be dispatched before he had a right to close his writing-box, or as he phrased it, "to say, *out damned spot*, and be a gentleman." In turning over his enormous mass of correspondence, I have almost invariably found some indication that, when a letter had re-

mained more than a day or two unanswered, it was because he found occasion for inquiry.

I ought not to omit, that in those days Scott was far too zealous a dragoon not to take a principal share in the stable duty. Before beginning his desk-work in the morning, he uniformly visited his favourite steed, and neither *Captain* nor *Lieutenant* nor *Brown Adam* (so called after one of the heroes of the Minstrelsy), liked to be fed except by him. The latter charger was indeed altogether intractable in other hands, though in his the most submissive of faithful allies. The moment he was bridled and saddled, it was the custom to open the stable door as a signal that his master expected him, when he immediately trotted to the side of the *leaping-on-stone*, of which Scott from his lameness found it convenient to make use, and stood there, silent and motionless as a rock, until he was fairly in his seat, after which he displayed his joy by neighing triumphantly through a brilliant succession of curvettings. Brown Adam never suffered himself to be backed but by his master. He broke, I believe, one groom's arm and another's leg in the rash attempt to tamper with his dignity.

Camp was at this time the constant parlour dog. He was very handsome, very intelligent, and naturally very fierce, but gentle as a lamb among the children. As for a brace of lighter pets, styled Douglas and Percy, he kept one window of his study open, whatever might be the state of the weather, that they might leap out and in as the fancy moved them. He always talked to Camp as if he understood what was said—and the animal certainly did understand not a little of it; in particular, it seemed as if he perfectly comprehended on all occasions that his master considered him as a sensible and steady friend—the greyhounds as volatile young creatures whose freaks must be borne with.

"Every day," says Mr Skene, "we had some hours of coursing with the greyhounds, or riding at random over

the hills, or of spearing salmon in the Tweed by sunlight: which last sport, moreover, we often renewed at night by the help of torches. This amusement of *burning the water*, as it is called, was not without some hazard; for the large salmon generally lie in the pools, the depths of which it is not easy to estimate with precision by torchlight,—so that not unfrequently, when the sportsman makes a determined thrust at a fish apparently within reach, his eye has grossly deceived him, and instead of the point of the weapon encountering the prey, he finds himself launched with corresponding vehemence heels over head into the pool, both spear and salmon gone, the torch thrown out by the concussion of the boat, and quenched in the stream, while the boat itself has of course receded to some distance. I remember the first time I accompanied our friend, he went right over the gunwale in this manner, and had I not accidentally been at his side, and made a successful grasp at the skirt of his jacket as he plunged overboard, he must at least have had an awkward dive for it. Such are the contingencies of *burning the water*. The pleasures consist in being penetrated with cold and wet, having your shins broken against the stones in the dark, and perhaps mastering one fish out of every twenty you take aim at."

In all these amusements, but particularly in the *burning of the water*, Scott's most regular companion at this time was John Lord Somerville, who united with higher qualities an enthusiastic love for such sports, and consummate address in them. This amiable nobleman then passed his autumns at Alwyn, some eight or nine miles below Ashestiel. They interchanged visits almost every week; and Scott profited largely by his friend's known skill in every department of rural economy. He always talked of him as his master in the art of planting.

The laird of Rubislaw seldom failed to spend a part of the autumn at Ashestiel, as long as Scott remained there; and during these visits they often gave a wider scope to

their expeditions. "Indeed," says Mr Skene, "there are few scenes at all celebrated either in the history, tradition, or romance of the Border counties, which we did not explore together in the course of our rambles. We traversed the entire vales of the Yarrow and Ettrick, with all their sweet tributary glens, and never failed to find a hearty welcome from the farmers at whose houses we stopped, either for dinner or for the night. He was their chief-magistrate, extremely popular in that official capacity; and nothing could be more gratifying than the frank and hearty reception which everywhere greeted our arrival, however unexpected. The exhilarating air of the mountains, and the healthy exercise of the day, secured our relishing homely fare, and we found inexhaustible entertainment in the varied display of character which the affability of *the Sheriff* drew forth on all occasions in genuine breadth and purity. The beauty of the scenery gave full employment to my pencil, with the free and frequent exercise of which he never seemed to feel impatient. He was at all times ready and willing to alight when any object attracted my notice, and used to seat himself beside me on the brae, to con over some ballad appropriate to the occasion, or narrate the tradition of the glen—sometimes, perhaps, to note a passing idea in his pocket-book; but this was rare, for in general he relied with confidence on the great storehouse of his memory.

"One of our earliest expeditions was to visit the wild scenery of the mountainous tract above Moffat, including the cascade of the Grey Mare's Tail, and the dark tarn called Loch Skene. In our ascent to the lake we got completely bewildered in the thick fog which generally envelopes the rugged features of that lonely region; and, as we were groping through the maze of bogs, the ground gave way, and down went horse and horsemen pell-mell into a slough of peaty mud and black water, out of which, entangled as we were with our plaids and floundering nags,

it was no easy matter to get extricated. Indeed, unless we had prudently left our gallant steeds at a farm-house below, and borrowed hill-ponies for the occasion, the result might have been worse than laughable. As it was, we rose like the spirits of the bog, covered *cap-à-pie* with slime, to free themselves from which, our wily ponies took to rolling about on the heather, and we had nothing for it but following their example. At length, as we approached the gloomy loch, a huge eagle heaved himself from the margin and rose right over us, screaming his scorn of the intruders; and altogether it would be impossible to picture anything more desolately savage than the scene which opened, as if raised by enchantment on purpose to gratify the poet's eye; thick folds of fog rolling incessantly over the face of the inky waters, but rent asunder now in one direction, and then in another—so as to afford us a glimpse of some projecting rock or naked point of land, or island bearing a few scraggy stumps of pine—and then closing again in universal darkness upon the cheerless waste. Much of the scenery of Old Mortality was drawn from that day's ride. It was also in the course of this excursion that we encountered that amusing personage introduced into Guy Mannering as 'Tod Gabbie.' He was one of those itinerants who gain a subsistence among the moorland farmers by relieving them of foxes, polecats, and the like depredators—a half-witted, stuttering, and most original creature.

"Having explored all the wonders of Moffatdale, we turned ourselves towards *Blackhouse Tower*, to visit Scott's worthy acquaintances the Laidlaws, and reached it after a long and intricate ride, having been again led off our course by the greyhounds, who had been seduced by a strange dog that joined company to engage in full pursuit upon the tract of what we presumed to be either a fox or a roe-deer. The chase was protracted and perplexing, from

the mist that skirted the hill tops; but at length we reached the scene of slaughter, and were much distressed to find that a stately old he-goat had been the victim. He seemed to have fought a stout battle for his life, but now lay mangled in the midst of his panting enemies, who betrayed, on our approach, strong consciousness of delinquency and apprehension of the lash, which was administered accordingly to soothe the manes of the luckless Capricorn—though, after all, the dogs were not so much to blame in mistaking his game flavour, since the fogs must have kept him out of view till the last moment. Our visit to Blackhouse was highly interesting; the excellent old tenant being still in life, and the whole family group presenting a perfect picture of innocent and simple happiness, while the animated, intelligent, and original conversation of our friend William was quite charming.

"Sir Adam Fergusson and the Ettrick Shepherd were of the party that explored Loch Skene and hunted the unfortunate he-goat.

"I need not tell you that Saint Mary's Loch, and the Loch of the Lowes, were among the most favourite scenes of our excursions, as his fondness for them continued to his last days, and we have both visited them many times together in his company. I may say the same of the Teviot and the Aill, Borthwick water, and the lonely towers of Buccleuch and Harden, Minto, Roxburgh, Gilnockie, &c. I think it was either in 1805 or 1806 that I first explored the Borthwick with him, when on our way to pass a week at Langholm with Lord and Lady Dalkeith, upon which occasion the otter-hunt, so well described in Guy Mannering, was got up by our noble host; and I can never forget the delight with which Scott observed the enthusiasm of the high-spirited yeomen, who had assembled in multitudes to partake the sport of their dear young chief, well mounted, and dashing about from

rock to rock with a reckless ardour which recalled the alacrity of their forefathers in following the Buccleuchs of former days through adventures of a more serious order.

"Whatever the banks of the Tweed, from its source to its termination, presented of interest, we frequently visited; and I do verily believe there is not a single ford in the whole course of that river which we have not traversed together. He had an amazing fondness for fords, and was not a little adventurous in plunging through, whatever might be the state of the flood, and this even though there happened to be a bridge in view. If it seemed possible to scramble through, he scorned to go ten yards about, and in fact preferred the ford; and it is to be remarked, that most of the heroes of his tales seem to have been endued with similar propensities—even the White Lady of Avenel delights in the ford. He sometimes even attempted them on foot, though his lameness interfered considerably with his progress among the slippery stones. Upon one occasion of this sort I was assisting him through the Ettrick, and we had both got upon the same tottering stone in the middle of the stream, when some story about a *kelpie* occurring to him, he must needs stop and tell it with all his usual vivacity—and then laughing heartily at his own joke, he slipped his foot, or the stone shuffled beneath him, and down he went headlong into the pool, pulling me after him. We escaped, however, with no worse than a thorough drenching and the loss of his stick, which floated down the river, and he was as ready as ever for a similar exploit before his clothes were half dried upon his back."

About this time Mr and Mrs Scott made a short excursion to the Lakes of Cumberland and Westmoreland, and visited some of their finest scenery, in company with Mr Wordsworth. I have found no written narrative of this little tour, but I have often heard Scott speak with enthusiastic delight of the reception he met with in the humble cottage which his brother poet then inhabited on the

banks of Grasmere; and at least one of the days they spent together was destined to furnish a theme for the verse of each, namely, that which they gave to the ascent of Helvellyn, where, in the course of the preceding spring, a young gentleman having lost his way and perished by falling over a precipice, his remains were discovered, three months afterwards, still watched by "a faithful terrier-bitch, his constant attendant during frequent rambles among the wilds."[1] This day they were accompanied by an illustrious philosopher, who was also a true poet—and might have been one of the greatest of poets had he chosen; and I have heard Mr Wordsworth say, that it would be difficult to express the feelings with which he, who so often had climbed Helvellyn alone, found himself standing on its summit with two such men as Scott and Davy.

After leaving Mr Wordsworth, Scott carried his wife to spend a few days at Gilsland, among the scenes where they had first met; and his reception by the company at the wells was such as to make him look back with something of regret, as well as of satisfaction, to the change that had occurred in his circumstances since 1797. They were, however, enjoying themselves much there, when he received intelligence which induced him to believe that a French force was about to land in Scotland:—the alarm indeed had spread far and wide; and a mighty gathering of volunteers, horse and foot, from the Lothians and the Border country, took place in consequence at Dalkeith. He was not slow to obey the summons. He had luckily chosen to accompany on horseback the carriage in which Mrs Scott travelled. His good steed carried him to the spot of rendezvous, full a hundred miles from Gilsland, within twenty-four hours; and on reaching it, though no doubt to his disappointment the alarm had already blown over, he was delighted with the general enthusiasm that had thus been

[1] See *Poetical Works*, edit. 1841, p. 629; and compare Wordsworth—8vo. edit. vol. iii. p. 96.

put to the test—and, above all, by the rapidity with which the yeomen of Ettrick forest had poured down from their glens, under the guidance of his good friend and neighbour, Mr Pringle of Torwoodlee. These fine fellows were quartered along with the Edinburgh troop when he reached Dalkeith and Musselburgh; and after some sham battling, and a few evenings of high jollity had crowned the needless muster of the beacon-fires, he immediately turned his horse again towards the south, and rejoined Mrs Scott at Carlisle.[1]

By the way, it was during his fiery ride from Gilsland to Dalkeith, on the occasion above mentioned, that he composed his Bard's Incantation:—

> "The forest of Glenmore is drear,
> It is all of black pine and the dark oak-tree," &c.—

and the verses bear the full stamp of the feelings of the moment.

Meantime, the affair of the Clerkship, opened nine or ten months before, had not been neglected by the friends on whose counsel and assistance Scott had relied. Whether Mr Pitt's hint to Mr William Dundas, that he would willingly find an opportunity to promote the interests of the author of the Lay, or some conversation between the Duke of Buccleuch and Lord Melville, first encouraged him to this direction of his views, I am not able to state distinctly; but I believe that the desire to see his fortunes placed on some more substantial basis, was at this time partaken pretty equally by the three persons who had the principal influence in the distribution of the crown patronage in Scotland; and as his object was rather to secure a future than an immediate increase of official income, it was comparatively easy to make such an arrangement as would satisfy his ambition. George Home of Wedderburn, an old friend of his family, had now held a Clerkship for upwards of thirty years. In those days

[1] See Note, "Alarm of Invasion," Antiquary, vol. ii. p. 338.

there was no system of retiring pensions for the worn-out functionary of this class, and the usual method was, either that he should resign in favour of a successor who advanced a sum of money according to the circumstances of his age and health, or for a coadjutor to be associated with him in his patent, who undertook the duty on condition of a division of salary. Scott offered to relieve Mr Home of all the labours of his office, and to allow him, nevertheless, to retain its emoluments entire; and the aged clerk of course joined his exertions to procure a conjoint-patent on these very advantageous terms. About the close of 1805, a new patent was drawn out accordingly; but, by a clerical inadvertency, it was drawn out solely in Scott's favour, no mention of Mr Home being inserted in the instrument. Although, therefore, the sign-manual had been affixed, and there remained nothing but to pay the fees and take out the commission, Scott, on discovering this error, could not proceed in the business; since, in the event of his dying before Mr Home, that gentleman would have lost the vested interest which he had stipulated to retain. A pending charge of pecuniary corruption had compelled Lord Melville to retire from office some time before Mr Pitt's death (January 23, 1806); and the cloud of popular obloquy under which he now laboured, rendered it impossible that Scott should expect assistance from the quarter to which, under any other circumstances, he would naturally have turned for extrication from this difficulty. He therefore, as soon as the Fox and Grenville cabinet had been nominated, proceeded to London, to make in his own person such representations as might be necessary to secure the issuing of the patent in the right shape.

It seems wonderful that he should ever have doubted for a single moment of the result; since, had the new Cabinet been purely Whig, and had he been the most violent and obnoxious of Tory partisans, neither of which was the case, the arrangement had been not only virtually,

but, with the exception of an evident official blunder, formally completed; and no Secretary of State, as I must think, could have refused to rectify the paltry mistake in question, without a dereliction of every principle of honour. At this period, however, Scott had by no means measured either the character, the feelings, or the arrangements of great public functionaries, by the standard with which observation and experience subsequently furnished him. He had breathed hitherto, as far as political questions of all sorts were concerned, the hot atmosphere of a very narrow scene—and seems (from his letters) to have pictured to himself Whitehall and Downing Street as only a wider stage for the exhibition of the bitter and fanatical prejudices that tormented the petty circles of the Parliament House at Edinburgh; the true bearing and scope of which no man in after days more thoroughly understood, or more sincerely pitied. The seals of the Home Office had been placed in the hands of a nobleman of the highest character—moreover, an ardent lover of literature;—while the chief of the new Ministry was one of the most generous as well as tasteful of mankind; and there occurred no hesitation whatever on their parts. In communicating his success to the Earl of Dalkeith, whose warm personal kindness, without doubt, had first animated in his favour both the Duke of Buccleuch and Lord Melville, he says (London, February 11):—"Lord Spencer, upon the nature of the transaction being explained in an audience with which he favoured me, was pleased to direct the commission to be issued, as an act of justice, regretting, he said, it had not been from the beginning his own deed. This was doing the thing handsomely, and like an English nobleman. I have been very much fêted and caressed here, almost indeed to suffocation, but have been made amends by meeting some old friends. . . . . After all, a little literary reputation is of some use here. I suppose Solomon, when he compared a good name to a pot of ointment, meant that it oiled the hinges of the

hall-doors into which the possessors of that inestimable treasure wished to penetrate. What a *good* name was in Jerusalem, a *known* name seems to be in London. If you are celebrated for writing verses or for slicing cucumbers, for being two feet taller or two feet less than any other biped, for acting plays when you should be whipped at school, or for attending schools and institutions when you should be preparing for your grave,—your notoriety becomes a talisman—an 'Open Sesame' before which everything gives way—till you are voted a bore, and discarded for a new plaything. As this is a consummation of notoriety which I am by no means ambitious of experiencing, I hope I shall be very soon able to shape my course northward, to enjoy my good fortune at my leisure and snap my fingers at the Bar and all its works. . . . . I dine to-day at Holland-house; I refused to go before, lest it should be thought I was soliciting interest in that quarter, as I abhor even the shadow of changing or turning with the tide." He says elsewhere,—"I never saw Mr Fox on this or any other occasion, and never made any application to him, conceiving, that in doing so, I might have been supposed to express political opinions different from those which I had always professed. In his private capacity, there is no man to whom I would have been more proud to owe an obligation—had I been so distinguished."[1]

Among other eminent men with whom he on this occasion first made acquaintance, were Ellis's bosom friends, Frere and Canning; with the latter of whom his intercourse became afterwards close and confidential. It was now also that he first saw Joanna Baillie, of whose Plays on the Passions he had been, from their first appearance, an enthusiastic admirer. The late Mr Sotheby, the translator of Oberon, &c. &c., was the friend who introduced him to the poetess of Hampstead. Being asked in 1836

[1] Introduction to Marmion, 1830.

what impression he made upon her at this interview—"I was at first," she answered, "a little disappointed, for I was fresh from the Lay, and had pictured to myself an ideal elegance and refinement of feature; but I said to myself, If I had been in a crowd, and at a loss what to do, I should have fixed upon that face among a thousand, as the sure index of the benevolence and the shrewdness that would and could help me in my strait. We had not talked long, however, before I saw in the expressive play of his countenance far more even of elegance and refinement than I had missed in its mere lines." The acquaintance thus begun, soon ripened into a most affectionate intimacy; and thenceforth Mrs Joanna and her distinguished brother, Dr Matthew Baillie, were among the friends to whose society Scott looked forward with the greatest pleasure when about to visit the metropolis. I ought to have mentioned before that he had known Mr Sotheby at a very early period of life,—that amiable and excellent man having been stationed for some time at Edinburgh while serving his Majesty as a captain of dragoons. Scott ever retained for him a sincere regard; he was always, when in London, a frequent guest at his hospitable board, and owed to him the personal acquaintance of not a few of their most eminent contemporaries.

Caroline, Princess of Wales, was in those days considered among the Tories, whose politics her husband had uniformly opposed, as the victim of unmerited misfortune, cast aside, from the mere wantonness of caprice, by a gay and dissolute voluptuary; while the Prince's Whig associates had espoused his quarrel, and were already, as the event shewed, prepared to act, publicly as well as privately, as if they believed her to be among the most abandoned of her sex. I know not by whom Scott was first introduced to her little Court at Blackheath; but I think it was probably through Mrs Hayman, a lady of her bedchamber, several of whose notes and letters occur about this time in the collection of his correspondence. The careless

levity of the Princess's manner was observed by him, I have heard him say, with much regret, as likely to bring the purity of heart and mind, for which he gave her credit, into suspicion. For example, when, in the course of the evening, she conducted him by himself to admire some flowers in a conservatory, and, the place being rather dark, his lameness occasioned him to hesitate for a moment in following her down some steps which she had taken at a skip, she turned round, and said, with mock indignation, "Ah! false and faint-hearted troubadour! you will not trust yourself with me for fear of your neck!"

I find from one of Mrs Hayman's letters, that on being asked, at Montague House, to recite some verses of his own, he replied that he had none unpublished which he thought worthy of her Royal Highness's attention, but introduced a short account of the Ettrick Shepherd, and repeated one of the ballads of the *Mountain Bard*, for which he was then endeavouring to procure subscribers. The Princess appears to have been interested by the story, and she affected, at all events, to be pleased with the lines; she desired that her name might be placed on the Shepherd's list, and thus he had at least one gleam of royal patronage.

I shall not dwell at present upon Scott's method of conduct in the circumstances of an eminently popular author beleaguered by the importunities of fashionable admirers: his bearing when first exposed to such influences was exactly what it was to the end, and I shall have occasion in the sequel to produce the evidence of more than one deliberate observer.

His nomination as Clerk of Session appeared in the Gazette (March 8, 1806) which announced the instalment of the Hon. Henry Erskine and John Clerk of Eldin as Lord Advocate and Solicitor-General for Scotland. The promotion at such a moment, of a distinguished Tory, might well excite the wonder of the Parliament House, and even when the circumstances were explained, the

inferior local adherents of the triumphant cause were far from considering the conduct of their superiors in this matter with feelings of satisfaction. The indication of such humours was deeply resented by his haughty spirit; and he in his turn shewed his irritation in a manner well calculated to extend to higher quarters the spleen with which his advancement had been regarded by persons unworthy of his attention. It short, it was almost immediately after a Whig Ministry had gazetted his appointment to an office which had for twelve months formed a principal object of his ambition, that, rebelling against the implied suspicion of his having accepted something like a personal obligation at the hands of adverse politicians, he for the first time put himself forward as a decided Tory partisan.

The impeachment of Lord Melville was among the first measures of the new Government; and personal affection and gratitude graced as well as heightened the zeal with which Scott watched the issue of this, in his eyes, vindictive proceeding; but, though the ex-minister's ultimate acquittal was, as to all the charges involving his personal honour, complete, it must now be allowed that the investigation brought out many circumstances by no means creditable to his discretion; and the rejoicings of his friends ought not, therefore, to have been scornfully jubilant. Such they were, however—at least in Edinburgh; and Scott took his share in them by inditing a song, which was sung by James Ballantyne, and received with clamorous applauses, at a public dinner given in honour of the event on the 27th of June 1806.[1]

[1] The reader may turn to this song in the later Editions of Scott's Poetical Works. Mr W. Savage Landor, a man of great learning and great abilities, has in a recent collective edition of his writings reproduced many uncharitable judgments on distinguished contemporaries, which the reflection of advanced life might have been expected to cancel. Sir Walter Scott has his full share in

But enough of this. Scott's Tory feelings certainly appear to have been kept in a very excited state during the whole of that short reign of the Whigs. He then, for the first time, mingled keenly in the details of county politics,—canvassed electors—harangued meetings; and, in a word, made himself conspicuous as a leading instrument of his party—more especially as an indefatigable local manager, wherever the parliamentary interest of the Buccleuch family was in peril. But he was, in truth, earnest and serious in his belief that the new rulers of the country were disposed to abolish many of its most valuable institutions; and he regarded with special jealousy certain schemes of innovation with respect to the courts of law and the administration of justice, which were set on foot

these, but he suffers in good company. I must, however, notice the distinct assertion (vol. i. p. 339), that Scott "composed and sung a triumphal song on the death of a minister whom, in his lifetime, he had flattered, and who was just in his coffin when the minstrel sang *the fox is run to earth.* Constable of Edinburgh heard him, and related the fact to Curran, who expressed his incredulity with great vehemence, and his abhorrence was greater than his incredulity." The only possible foundation on which this story can have been built is the occurrence in one stanza of the song mentioned in my text of the words, *Tally-ho to the fox.* That song was written and sung in June 1806. Mr Fox was then minister, and died in September 1806. The lines which Mr Landor speaks of as "flattering Fox during his lifetime," are very celebrated lines: they appeared in the epistle prefixed to the first canto of Marmion, which was published in February 1808, and their subject is the juxtaposition of the tombs of Pitt and Fox in Westminster Abbey. Everybody who knew Scott knows that he never sang a song in his life; and if that had not been notorious, who but Mr Landor could have heard without "incredulity," that he sang a triumphal song on the death of Fox in the presence of the publisher of Marmion and proprietor of the Edinburgh Review? I may add, though it is needless, that Constable's son-in-law and partner, Mr Cadell, "never heard of such a song as that described by Mr Landor."

by the Crown officers for Scotland. At a debate of the Faculty of Advocates on some of these propositions, he made a speech much longer than any he had ever before delivered in that assembly; and several who heard it have assured me, that it had a flow and energy of eloquence for which those who knew him best had been quite unprepared. When the meeting broke up, he walked across *the Mound*, on his way to Castle Street, between Mr Jeffrey and another of his reforming friends, who complimented him on the rhetorical powers he had been displaying, and would willingly have treated the subject-matter of the discussion playfully. But his feelings had been moved to an extent far beyond their apprehension: he exclaimed, "No, no—'tis no laughing matter; little by little, whatever your wishes may be, you will destroy and undermine, until nothing of what makes Scotland Scotland shall remain." And so saying, he turned round to conceal his agitation—but not before Mr Jeffrey saw tears gushing down his cheek—resting his head until he recovered himself on the wall of the Mound. Seldom, if ever, in his more advanced age, did any feelings obtain such mastery.

Before any of these scenes occurred he had entered upon his duties as Clerk of Session; and as he continued to discharge them with exemplary regularity, and to the entire satisfaction both of the Judges and the Bar, during the long period of twenty-five years, I think it proper to tell precisely in what they consisted.

The Court of Session sat, in his time, from the 12th of May to the 12th of July, and again from the 12th of November, with a short interval at Christmas, to the 12th of March. The Judges of the Inner Court took their places on the Bench, every morning not later than ten o'clock, and remained according to the amount of business ready for despatch, but seldom for less than four or more than six hours daily; during which space the Principal Clerks continued seated at a table below the Bench, to watch the progress of

the suits, and record the decisions—the cases of all classes being equally apportioned among their number. The Court of Session, however, does not sit on Monday, that day being reserved for the criminal business of the High Court of Justiciary, and there is also another blank day every other week,—the *Teind Wednesday*, as it is called, when the Judges are assembled for the hearing of tithe questions, which belong to a separate jurisdiction, of comparatively modern creation, and having its own separate establishment of officers. On the whole, then, Scott's attendance in Court may be taken to have amounted, on the average, to from four to six hours daily during rather less than six months out of the twelve.

Not a little of the Clerk's business in Court is merely formal, and indeed mechanical; but there are few days in which he is not called upon for the exertion of his higher faculties, in reducing the decisions of the Bench, orally pronounced, to technical shape; which, in a new, complex, or difficult case, cannot be satisfactorily done without close attention to all the previous proceedings and written documents, an accurate understanding of the principles or precedents on which it has been determined, and a thorough command of the whole vocabulary of legal forms. Dull or indolent men, promoted through the mere wantonness of political patronage, might, no doubt, contrive to devolve the harder part of their duty upon humbler assistants: but in general, the office had been held by gentlemen of high character and attainments; and more than one among Scott's own colleagues enjoyed the reputation of legal science that would have done honour to the Bench. Such men, of course, prided themselves on doing well whatever it was their proper function to do; and it was by their example, not that of the drones who condescended to lean upon unseen and irresponsible inferiors, that Scott uniformly modelled his own conduct as a Clerk of Session. To do this, required,

of necessity, constant study of law-papers and authorities at home. There was also a great deal of really base drudgery, such as the authenticating of registered deeds by signature, which he had to go through out of Court; he had, too, a Shrievalty, though not a heavy one, all the while upon his hands;—and, on the whole, it forms one of the most remarkable features in his history, that, throughout the most active period of his literary career, he must have devoted a large proportion of his hours, during half at least of every year, to the conscientious discharge of professional duties.

Henceforth, then, when in Edinburgh, his literary work was performed chiefly before breakfast; with the assistance of such evening hours as he could contrive to rescue from the consideration of Court papers, and from those social engagements in which, year after year, as his celebrity advanced, he was of necessity more and more largely involved; and of those entire days during which the Court of Session did not sit—days which, by most of those holding the same official station, were given to relaxation and amusement. So long as he continued quarter-master of the Volunteer Cavalry, of course he had, even while in Edinburgh, some occasional horse exercise; but, in general, his town life henceforth was in that respect as inactive as his country life ever was the reverse. He scorned for a long while to attach any consequence to this complete alternation of habits; but we shall find him confessing in the sequel that it proved highly injurious to his bodily health.

I may here observe, that the duties of his clerkship brought him into close daily connexion with a set of gentlemen, most of whom were soon regarded by him with the most cordial affection and confidence. One of his new colleagues was David Hume (the nephew of the historian) whose lectures on the Law of Scotland are characterised with just eulogy in the Ashestiel Memoir, and who subsequently became a Baron of the Exchequer; a man as

virtuous and amiable, as conspicuous for masculine vigour of intellect and variety of knowledge. Another was Hector Macdonald Buchanan of Drummakiln, a frank-hearted and generous gentleman, not the less acceptable to Scott for the Highland prejudices which he inherited with the high blood of Clanranald; at whose beautiful seat of Ross Priory, on the shores of Lochlomond, he was henceforth almost annually a visitor—a circumstance which has left many traces in the Waverley Novels. A third (though I believe of later appointment), with whom his intimacy was not less strict, was the late excellent Sir Robert Dundas, of Beechwood, Bart.; and the fourth, was the friend of his boyhood, one of the dearest he ever had, Colin Mackenzie of Portmore. With these gentlemen's families, he and his lived in such constant familiarity of kindness, that the children all called their fathers' colleagues *uncles*, and the mothers of their little friends, *aunts;* and in truth, the establishment was a brotherhood.

CHAPTER V.

Marmion—Edition of Dryden, &c.—Morritt—Domestic life—Quarrel with Constable & Co.—John Ballantyne started as a Publisher—The Quarterly Review begun. 1806–1809.

DURING the whole of 1806 and 1807 Dryden continued to occupy the greater share of Scott's literary hours; but in the course of the former year he found time, and (notwithstanding a few political bickerings) inclination to draw up three papers for the Edinburgh Review; one being that exquisite piece of humour, the article on the Miseries of Human Life, to which Mr Jeffrey added some, if not all, of the *Reviewers' Groans.* He also edited, with Preface and Notes, "Original Memoirs written during the Great Civil Wars; being the Life of Sir Henry Slingsby, and Memoirs of Captain Hodgson," &c. This volume was put forth in October 1806 by Constable; and in November he began *Marmion,*—the first of his own Poems in which that enterprising firm had a primary part.

He was at this time in communication with several booksellers, each of whom would willingly have engrossed his labour; but from the moment that his undertakings began to be serious, he seems to have acted on the maxim, that no author should ever let any one house fancy that they had obtained a right of monopoly over his works—or, as he expressed it, in the language of the Scottish feudalists, "that they had completely thirled him to their mill." Of the conduct of Messrs Longman, he has attested that it was liberal beyond his expectation; but, nevertheless, a negotiation which they now opened proved fruitless. Constable offered a thousand guineas for the poem very shortly after it was begun, and with-

out having seen one line of it. It is hinted in the Introduction of 1830, that private circumstances rendered it desirable for Scott to obtain the immediate command of such a sum; the price was actually paid long before the book was published; and it suits very well with Constable's character to suppose that his readiness to advance the money may have outstripped the calculations of more established dealers, and thus cast the balance in his favour. He was not, however, so unwise as to keep the whole adventure to himself. His bargain being concluded, he tendered one-fourth of the copyright to Miller of Albemarle Street, and another to John Murray, then of Fleet Street; and the latter at once replied, "We both view it as honourable, profitable, and glorious to be concerned in the publication of a new poem by Walter Scott." The news that a thousand guineas had been paid for an unseen and unfinished MS. seemed in those days portentous; and it must be allowed that the man who received such a sum for a performance in embryo, had made a great step in the hazards as well as in the honours of authorship. The private circumstances which he alludes to as having precipitated his re-appearance as a poet were connected with his brother Thomas's final withdrawal from his practice as a Writer to the Signet; but it is extremely improbable that, in the absence of any such occurrence, a young, energetic, and ambitious man would have long resisted the stimulus of such success as had attended the Last Minstrel.

"I had formed," he says, "the prudent resolution to bestow a little more labour than I had yet done, and to be in no hurry again to announce myself as a candidate for literary fame. Accordingly, particular passages of a poem which was finally called *Marmion* were laboured with a good deal of care by one by whom much care was seldom bestowed. Whether the work was worth the labour or not, I am no competent judge; but I may be permitted to say, that the period of its composition was a very happy one in my life;

so much so, that I remember with pleasure at this moment (1830) some of the spots in which particular passages were composed." The first four of the Introductory Epistles are dated Ashestiel, and they point out very distinctly some of these spots. There is a knoll with some tall old ashes on the adjoining farm of the Peel, where he was very fond of sitting by himself, and it still bears the name of the *Sheriff's Knowe*. Another favourite seat was beneath a huge oak hard by the river, at the extremity of the *haugh* of Ashestiel. It was here that while meditating his verses he used

> "To waste the solitary day
> In plucking from yon fen the reed,
> And watch it floating down the Tweed."

He frequently wandered far from home, however, attended only by his dog, and would return late in the evening, having let hour after hour slip away among the soft and melancholy wildernesses where Yarrow creeps from her fountains. The lines,

> "Oft in my mind such thoughts awake,
> By lone Saint Mary's silent lake," &c.

paint a scene not less impressive than what Byron found amidst the gigantic pines of the forest of Ravenna; and how completely does he set himself before us in the moment of his gentler and more solemn inspiration, by the closing couplet,—

> "Your horse's hoof-tread sounds too rude,
> So stilly is the solitude."

But when the theme was of a more stirring order, he enjoyed pursuing it over brake and fell at the full speed of his *Lieutenant*. I well remember his saying, as I rode with him across the hills from Ashestiel to Newark one day in his declining years—"Oh, man, I had many a grand gallop among these braes when I was thinking of Marmion, but a trotting canny pony must serve me now."

Mr Skene, however, informs me that many of the more energetic descriptions, and particularly that of the battle of

Flodden, were struck out while he was in quarters again with his cavalry, in the autumn of 1807. "In the intervals of drilling," he says, "Scott used to delight in walking his powerful black steed up and down by himself upon the Portobello sands, within the beating of the surge; and now and then you would see him plunge in his spurs, and go off as if at the charge, with the spray dashing about him. As we rode back to Musselburgh, he often came and placed himself beside me, to repeat the verses that he had been composing during these pauses of our exercise."

He seems to have communicated fragments of the poem very freely during the whole of its progress. As early as the 22d February 1807, I find Mrs Hayman acknowledging, in the name of the Princess of Wales, the receipt of a copy of the Introduction to Canto III., in which occurs the tribute to her heroic father, mortally wounded the year before at Jena—a tribute so grateful to her feelings, that she sent the poet an elegant silver vase as a memorial of her thankfulness. And about the same time, the Marchioness of Abercorn expresses the delight with which both she and her lord had read the generous verses on Pitt and Fox. But his connexion with this family was no new one; for his father, and afterwards his brother, had been the auditors of their Scotch rental.

In March, his researches concerning Dryden carried him again to the south. For several weeks he gave his day pretty regularly to the pamphlets and MSS. of the British Museum, and the evening to the brilliant societies that now courted him whenever he came within their sphere. "As I had," he writes to his brother-in-law in India, "contrary to many who avowed the same opinions in sunshine, held fast my integrity during the Foxites' interval of power, I found myself of course very well with the new administration." But he uniformly reserved his Saturday and Sunday either for Mr Ellis at Sunninghill, or Lord and Lady Abercorn at Stanmore; and the press copy of Cantos I.

and II. of Marmion attests that most of it reached Ballantyne in sheets franked by the Marquis, or his son-in-law Lord Aberdeen. Before he turned homeward, he made a short visit to his friend William Rose in Hampshire, and enjoyed in his company various long rides in the New Forest, a day in the dock-yard of Portsmouth, and two or three more in the Isle of Wight. Several sheets of Canto III. are also under covers franked from Gundimore. In the first week of May we find him at Lichfield, having diverged from the great road to Scotland for the purpose of visiting Miss Seward. Her account of her correspondent, whom till now she had never seen, was addressed to Mr Cary, the translator of Dante. "This proudest boast of the Caledonian muse is tall," she says, "and rather robust than slender, but lame in the same manner as Mr Hayley, and in a greater measure. Neither the contour of his face nor yet his features are elegant; his complexion healthy, and somewhat fair, without bloom. We find the singularity of brown hair and eye-lashes, with flaxen eyebrows; and a countenance open, ingenuous, and benevolent. When seriously conversing or earnestly attentive, though his eyes are rather of a lightish grey, deep thought is on their lids; he contracts his brow, and the rays of genius gleam aslant from the orbs beneath them. An upper lip too long prevents his mouth from being decidedly handsome; but the sweetest emanations of temper and heart play about it when he talks cheerfully or smiles—and in company he is much oftener gay than contemplative—his conversation an overflowing fountain of brilliant wit, apposite allusion, and playful archness—while on serious themes it is nervous and eloquent; the accent decidedly Scotch, yet by no means broad. Not less astonishing than was Johnson's memory is that of Mr Scott; like Johnson, also, his recitation is too monotonous and violent to do justice either to his own writings or those of others." Miss Seward adds, that she showed him the passage in Cary's Dante where Michael

Scott occurs, and that though he admired the spirit and skill of the version, he confessed his inability to find pleasure in the Divina Commedia. "The plan," he said, "appeared to him unhappy; the personal malignity and strange mode of revenge presumptuous and uninteresting." By the 12th of May he was at Edinburgh for the commencement of the summer session, and the printing of his Poem seems thenceforth to have gone on at times with great rapidity, at others slowly and irregularly; the latter Cantos having no doubt been merely blocked out when the first went to press, and his professional avocations, but above all his Dryden, occasioning frequent interruptions.

Mr Guthrie Wright, who was among the familiar associates of the Troop, has furnished me with some details which throw light on the construction of Marmion. This gentleman had, through Scott's good offices, suceeeded his brother Thomas in the charge of the Abercorn business. —"In the summer of 1807," he says," "I had the pleasure of making a trip with Sir Walter to Dumfries, for the purpose of meeting Lord Abercorn on his way to Ireland. His Lordship did not arrive for two or three days, and we employed the interval in visiting Sweetheart Abbey, Caerlaverock Castle, and some other ancient buildings in the neighbourhood. He recited poetry and old legends from morn till night; and it is impossible that anything could be more delightful than his society; but what I particularly allude to is the circumstance, that at that time he was writing *Marmion*, the three or four first cantos of which he had with him, and which he was so good as read to me. It is unnecessary to say how much I was enchanted with them; but as he good-naturedly asked me to state any observations that occurred to me, I said in joke that it appeared to me he had brought his hero by a very strange *route* into Scotland. 'Why,' says I, 'did ever mortal coming from England to Edinburgh go by Gifford, Crichton Castle, Borthwick Castle, and over the top of Blackford

Hill? Not only is it a circuitous *detour*, but there never was a road that way since the world was created!' 'That is a most irrelevant objection,' said Sir Walter; 'it was my good pleasure to bring Marmion by that route, for the purpose of describing the places you have mentioned, and the view from Blackford Hill—it was his business to find his road and pick his steps the best way he could. But, pray, how would you have me bring him? Not by the post-road, surely, as if he had been travelling in a mail-coach?' —'No,' I replied; 'there were neither post-roads nor mail-coaches in those days; but I think you might have brought him with a less chance of getting into a swamp, by allowing him to travel the natural route by Dunbar and the sea-coast; and then he might have tarried for a space with the famous Earl of Angus, surnamed Bell-the-Cat, at his favourite residence of Tantallon Castle, by which means you would have had not only that fortress with all his feudal followers, but the Castle of Dunbar, the Bass, and all the beautiful scenery of the Forth to describe.' This observation seemed to strike him much, and after a pause he exclaimed—'By Jove, you are right! I ought to have brought him that way;' and he added, 'but before he and I part, depend upon it he shall visit Tantallon.' He then asked if I had ever been there, and upon saying I had frequently, he desired me to describe it, which I did; and I verily believe it is from what I then said that the accurate description contained in the fifth canto was given—at least I never heard him say he had afterwards gone to visit the castle; and when the poem was published, I remember he laughed, and asked me how I liked Tantallon."

Just a year had elapsed from his beginning the poem, when he penned the Epistle for Canto IV. at Ashestiel; and who, that considers how busily his various pursuits and labours had been crowding the interval, can wonder to be told that

"Even now, it scarcely seems a day
Since first I tuned this idle lay—
A task so often laid aside
When leisure graver cares denied—
That now November's dreary gale,
Whose voice inspired my opening tale,
That same November gale once more
Whirls the dry leaves on Yarrow shore."

The fifth Introduction was written in Edinburgh in the month following; that to the last Canto, during the Christmas festivities of Mertoun-house, where, from the first days of his ballad-rhyming to the close of his life, he, like his bearded ancestor, usually spent that season with the immediate head of the race. The bulky appendix of notes, including a mass of curious antiquarian quotations, must have moved somewhat slowly through the printer's hands; but Marmion was at length ready for publication by the middle of February 1808.

Among the "graver cares" which he alludes to as having interrupted his progress, were those of preparing himself for an office to which he was formally appointed soon afterwards, namely, that of Secretary to a Parliamentary Commission for the improvement of Scottish Jurisprudence. This Commission, at the head of which was Sir Islay Campbell, Lord President of the Court of Session, continued in operation for two or three years. Scott's salary, as secretary, was a mere trifle; but he had been led to expect that his exertions in this capacity would lead to better things. In giving a general view of his affairs to his brother-in-law in India, he says—"I am principally pleased with my new appointment as being conferred on me by our chief law lords and King's counsel, and consequently an honourable professional distinction. The employment will be but temporary, but may have consequences important to my future lot in life, if I give due satisfaction in the discharge of it." He appears accordingly to have submitted to a great deal of drudgery, in mastering the technical con-

troversies which had called for legislatorial interference; and he discharged his functions, as usual, with the warm approbation of his superiors; but no result followed.

Not only did he write sundry articles for the Edinburgh Review while Marmion was on hand, but having now frequent correspondence with Mr Southey, whose literature had not as yet been very lucrative to him, he made an effort to enlist that friend also in the same critical corps. Thalaba and Madoc had been handled by them in no very flattering style; the early works of Wordsworth still more irreverently; but Southey declined these offers of intermediation on the score mainly of politics—expressing, at the same time, some regret that Wordsworth, in his magnificent sonnet on Killiecrankie, should have introduced that type of ultra-toryism, the Viscount of Dundee, without apparent censure of his character. In reply (15th December, 1807), Scott admits his own "extreme dislike" of the tone of the Review as to the war with Bonaparte. He says:—"Who ever thought he did a service to a person engaged in an arduous conflict, by proving to him, or attempting to prove, that he must necessarily be beaten? and what effect can such language have but to accelerate the accomplishment of the prophecy which it contains? And as for Catholic Emancipation—I am not, God knows, a bigot in religious matters, nor a friend to persecution; but if a particular sect of religionists are *ipso facto* connected with foreign politics—and placed under the spiritual direction of a class of priests, whose unrivalled dexterity and activity are increased by the rules which detach them from the rest of the world—I humbly think that we may be excused from intrusting to them those places in the State where the influence of such a clergy, who act under the direction of a passive tool of our worst foe, is likely to be attended with the most fatal consequences. If a gentleman chooses to walk about with a couple of pounds of gunpowder in his pocket, if I give him the shelter of my roof, I may at least

be permitted to exclude him from the seat next to the fire. So thinking, I have felt your scruples in doing anything for the Review of late. As for my good friend Dundee, I cannot admit his culpability in the extent you allege; and it is scandalous of the Sunday bard to join in your condemnation, 'and yet come of a noble Græme!'* I admit he was *tant soit peu sauvage*—but he was a noble savage; and the beastly Covenanters against whom he acted, hardly had any claim to be called men, unless what was founded on their walking upon their hind feet. You can hardly conceive the perfidy, cruelty, and stupidity of these people, according to the accounts they have themselves preserved. But I admit I had many cavalier prejudices instilled into me, as my ancestor was a Killiecrankie man."

Mr Southey happened to be in London when Marmion came out, and he wrote thus to the author on his return to Keswick—"Half the poem I had read at Heber's before my own copy arrived. I went punctually to breakfast with him, and he was long enough dressing to let me devour so much of it. The story is made of better materials than the Lay, yet they are not so well fitted together. As a whole, it has not pleased me so much—in parts, it has pleased me more. There is nothing so finely conceived in your former poem as the death of Marmion: there is nothing finer in its conception anywhere. The introductory epistles I did not wish away, because, as poems, they gave me great pleasure; but I wished them at the end of the volume, or at the beginning—anywhere except where they were. My taste is perhaps peculiar in disliking all interruptions in narrative poetry. When the poet lets his story sleep, and talks in his own person, it has to me the same sort of unpleasant effect that is produced at the end of an act. You are alive to know what follows, and lo—down comes the curtain, and the fiddlers begin with their abominations."

I pass over a multitude of the congratulatory effusions

* James Grahame, author of *The Sabbath*, &c.

of inferior names, but must not withhold part of a letter on a folio sheet, written not in the first hurry of excitement, but two months after Marmion had reached Ellis. He then says :—" All the world are agreed that you are like the elephant mentioned in the Spectator, who was the greatest elephant in the world except himself, and consequently, that the only question at issue is, whether the Lay or Marmion shall be reputed the most pleasing poem in our language—save and except one or two of Dryden's fables. But, with respect to the two rivals, I think the Lay is, on the whole, the greatest favourite. It is admitted that the fable of Marmion is greatly superior—that it contains a greater diversity of character—that it inspires more interest—and that it is by no means inferior in point of poetical expression ; but it is contended that the incident of Deloraine's journey to Melrose surpasses anything in Marmion, and that the personal appearance of the Minstrel, who, though the last, is by far the most charming of all minstrels, is by no means compensated by the idea of an author shorn of his picturesque beard, deprived of his harp, and writing letters to his intimate friends. These introductory epistles, indeed, though excellent in themselves, are in fact only interruptions to the fable ; and accordingly, nine out of ten have perused them separately, either after or before the poem—and it is obvious that they cannot have produced, in either case, the effect which was proposed—viz. of relieving the reader's attention, and giving variety to the whole. Perhaps, continue these critics, it would be fair to say that Marmion delights us in spite of its introductory epistles—while the Lay owes its principal charm to the venerable old minstrel :—the two poems may be considered as equally respectable to the talents of the author ; but the first, being a more perfect whole, will be more constantly preferred. Now, all this may be very true—but it is no less true that everybody has already read Marmion *more than once*—that it is the subject of

general conversation—that it delights all ages and all tastes, and that it is universally allowed to improve upon a second reading. My own opinion is, that both the productions are equally good in their different ways: yet, upon the whole, I had rather be the author of Marmion than of the Lay, because I think its species of excellence of much more difficult attainment. What degree of bulk may be essentially necessary to the corporeal part of an Epic poem, I know not; but sure I am that the story of Marmion might have furnished twelve books as easily as six—that the masterly character of Constance would not have been less bewitching had it been much more minutely painted—and that De Wilton might have been dilated with great ease, and even to considerable advantage;—in short, that had it been your intention merely to exhibit a spirited romantic story, instead of making that story subservient to the delineation of the manners which prevailed at a certain period of our history, the number and variety of your characters would have suited any scale of painting. Marmion is to Deloraine what Tom Jones is to Joseph Andrews;—the varnish of high breeding nowhere diminishes the prominence of the features—and the minion of a king is as light and sinewy a cavalier as the Borderer,—rather less ferocious, more wicked, less fit for the hero of a ballad, and far more for the hero of a regular poem. On the whole, I can sincerely assure you, '*sans phrase*,' that had I seen Marmion without knowing the author, I should have ranked it with Theodore and Honoria,—that is to say, on the very top shelf of English poetry." This elegant letter may no doubt be considered as an epitome of the very highest and most refined of London table-talk on Marmion, during the first freshness of its popularity, and before the only critical journal of which any one in those days thought very seriously, had pronounced its verdict.

When we consider some parts of that judgment, together with the author's personal intimacy with the editor,

and the aid which he had of late been affording to the Review itself, it must be allowed that Mr Jeffrey acquitted himself on this occasion in a manner highly creditable to his courageous sense of duty. The number for April 1808 was accompanied by this note :—" Queen Street, Tuesday. —Dear Scott,—If I did not give you credit for more magnanimity than other of your irritable tribe, I should scarcely venture to put this into your hands. As it is, I do it with no little solicitude, and earnestly hope that it will make no difference in the friendship which has hitherto subsisted between us. I have spoken of your poem exactly as I think, and though I cannot reasonably suppose that you will be pleased with everything I have said, it would mortify me very severely to believe I had given you pain. If you have any amity left for me, you will not delay very long to tell me so. In the meantime, I am very sincerely yours,—F. Jeffrey."

The reader will I hope pause here and read the article as it stands ; endeavouring to put himself into the situation of Scott when it was laid upon his desk, together with this ominous billet from the editor, who, as it happened, had been for some time engaged to dine that same Tuesday in Castle Street. The detailed criticism of the paper is, I am sure, done in a style on which the writer cannot now reflect with perfect equanimity, any more than on the lofty and decisive tone of the sweeping paragraphs by which it was introduced. All this, however, I can suppose Scott to have gone through with great composure ; but he must, I think, have wondered, to say the least, when he found himself accused of having " throughout neglected Scottish feelings and Scottish characters!"—He who had just poured out all the patriotic enthusiasm of his soul in so many passages of Marmion, which every Scotchman to the end of time will have by heart; painted the capital, the court, the camp, the heroic old chieftains of Scotland, in colours instinct with a fervour that can never die; and

dignified the most fatal of her national misfortunes by a celebration as loftily pathetic as ever blended pride with sorrow,—a battle-piece which even his critic had pronounced to be the noblest save in Homer! But not even this injustice was likely to wound him very deeply. Coming from one of the recent witnesses of his passionate agitation on *the Mound*, perhaps he would only smile at it. At all events, he could make allowance for the petulancies into which men the least disposed to injure the feelings of others will sometimes be betrayed, when the critical rod is in their hands. He assured Mr Jeffrey that the article had not disturbed his digestion, though he hoped neither his booksellers nor the public would agree with the opinions it expressed; and begged he would come to dinner at the hour previously appointed. Mr Jeffrey appeared accordingly, and was received by his host with the frankest cordiality; but had the mortification to observe that the mistress of the house, though perfectly polite, was not quite so easy with him as usual. She, too, behaved herself with exemplary civility during the dinner; but could not help saying, in her broken English, when her guest was departing, "Well, good-night, Mr Jeffrey—dey tell me that you have abused Scott in de Review, and I hope Mr Constable has paid *you* very well for writing it." This anecdote was not perhaps worth giving; but it has been printed already in an exaggerated shape, so I thought it as well to present the edition which I have derived from the lips of all the three persons concerned. No one, I am sure, will think the worse of any of them for it,—least of all of Mrs Scott. She might well be pardoned, if she took to herself more than her own share in the misadventures as well as the successes of the most affectionate of protectors. It was, I believe, about this time when, as Scott has confessed, "the popularity of Marmion gave him such a *heeze*, he had for a moment almost lost his footing," that a shrewd and sly observer, Mrs Grant of Laggan, said, wittily enough, upon

leaving a brilliant assembly where the poet had been surrounded by all the buzz and glare of fashionable ecstacy—"Mr Scott always seems to me like a glass, through which the rays of admiration pass without sensibly affecting it; but the bit of paper that lies beside it will presently be in a blaze—and no wonder."

I shall not, after so much about criticism, say anything more of Marmion in this place, than that I have always considered it as on the whole the greatest of Scott's poems. There is a certain light, easy, virgin charm about the Lay, which we look for in vain through the subsequent volumes of his verse; but the superior strength, and breadth, and boldness both of conception and execution in the Marmion appear to me indisputable. The great blot, the combination of *mean felony* with so many noble qualities in the character of the hero, was, as the poet says, severely commented on at the time by the most ardent of his early friends, Leyden; but though he admitted the justice of that criticism, he chose "to let the tree lie as it had fallen." He was also sensible that many of the subordinate and connecting parts of the narrative are flat, harsh, and obscure—but would never make any serious attempt to do away with these imperfections; and perhaps they, after all, heighten by contrast the effect of the passages of high-wrought enthusiasm which alone he considered, in after days, with satisfaction. As for the "epistolary dissertations" (as Jeffrey called them), it must, I take it, be allowed that they interfered with the flow of the story, when readers were turning the leaves in the first glow of curiosity; and they were not, in fact, originally intended to be interwoven in any fashion with the romance of Marmion. Though the author himself does not allude to, and had perhaps forgotten the circumstance, when writing the Introductory Essay of 1830—they were announced by an advertisement early in 1807 as "Six Epistles from Ettrick Forest," to be published in a separate volume; and

perhaps it might have been better that this first plan had been adhered to. But however that may be, are there any pages, among all he ever wrote, that one would be more sorry he should not have written? They are among the most delicious portraitures that genius ever painted of itself, —buoyant, virtuous, happy genius—exulting in its own energies, yet possessed and mastered by a clear, calm, modest mind, and happy only in diffusing happiness around it.

The feelings of political partisanship find no place in this poem; but though Mr Jeffrey chose to complain of its "manifest neglect of *Scottish* feelings," I take leave to suspect that the boldness and energy of *British* patriotism which breathes in so many passages, may have had more share than that alleged omission in pointing the pen that criticised Marmion. Scott had sternly and indignantly rebuked and denounced the then too prevalent spirit of anti-national despondence; he had put the trumpet to his lips, and done his part at least to sustain the hope and resolution of his countrymen in that struggle from which it was the doctrine of the Edinburgh Review that no sane observer of the times could anticipate anything but ruin and degradation. He must ever be considered as the "mighty minstrel" of the Antigallican war; and it was Marmion that first announced him in that character.

Be all this as it may, his connexion with the Review was now broken off; and indeed it was never renewed, except in one instance, many years after, when the strong wish to serve poor Maturin shook him for a moment from his purpose. The loftiest and purest of human beings seldom act but under a mixture of motives, and I shall not attempt to guess in what proportions he was swayed by aversion to the political doctrines which the journal had lately been avowing with increased openness—by dissatisfaction with its judgments of his own works—or, lastly, by the feeling that, whether those judgments were or were not just, it was but an idle business for him to assist

by his own pen the popularity of the vehicle that diffused them. That he was influenced more or less by all of these considerations, appears highly probable; and I fancy I can trace some indications of each of them in a letter with which I am favoured by a warm lover of literature, and a sincere admirer both of Scott and Jeffrey, and though numbered among the Tories in the House of Commons, yet one of the most liberal section of his party[1]—who happened to visit Scotland shortly after the article on Marmion appeared, and has set down his recollections of the course of table-talk at a dinner where he for the first time met the poet in company with his censor:—"There were," he says, "only a few people besides the two lions—and assuredly I have seldom passed a more agreeable day. A thousand subjects of literature, antiquities, and manners, were started; and much was I struck, as you may well suppose, by the extent, correctness, discrimination, and accuracy of Jeffrey's information; equally so with his taste, acuteness, and wit, in dissecting every book, author, and story that came in our way. Nothing could surpass the variety of his knowledge, but the easy rapidity of his manner of producing it. He was then in his meridian. Scott, delighted to draw him out, delighted also to talk himself, and displayed, I think, even a larger range of anecdote and illustration; remembering every thing, whether true or false, that was characteristic or impressive; every thing that was good, or lovely, or lively. It struck me that there was this great difference—Jeffrey, for the most part entertained us, when books were under discussion, with the detection of faults, blunders, absurdities, or plagiarisms: Scott took up the matter where he left it, recalled some compensating beauty or excellence for which no credit had been allowed, and by the recitation, perhaps, of one fine stanza, set the poor victim on his legs again. I believe it was just about this time that Scott had abandoned his place in Mr Jeffrey's corps. The journal had

[1] The late Mr Morritt of Rokeby—1848.

been started among the clever young society with which Edinburgh abounded when they were both entering life as barristers; and Jeffrey's principal coadjutors for some time were Sydney Smith, Brougham, Horner, Scott himself—and on scientific subjects, Playfair; but clever contributors were sought for in all quarters. But it was not long before Brougham dipped the concern deep in witty Whiggery; and it was thought at the time that some very foolish neglects on the part of Pitt had a principal share in making several of these brilliant young men decide on carrying over their weapons to the enemy's camp. Scott was a strong Tory, nay, by family recollections and poetical feelings of association, a Jacobite. Jeffrey, however, was an early friend—and thus there was a confliction of feelings on both sides. Scott, as I was told, remonstrated against the deepening Whiggery—Jeffrey alleged that he could not resist the wit. Scott offered to try his hand at a witty bit of Toryism—but the editor pleaded off, upon the danger of inconsistency. These differences first cooled—and soon dissolved their federation.—To return to our gay dinner. As the claret was taking its rounds, Jeffrey introduced some good-natured eulogy of his old supporters—Sydney Smith, Brougham, and Horner. 'Come,' says Scott, 'you can't say too much about Sydney or Brougham, but I will not admire your Horner: he always put me in mind of Obadiah's bull, who, although, as Father Shandy observed, he never produced a calf, went through his business with such a grave demeanour, that he always maintained his credit in the parish!' The fun of the illustration tempted him to this sally, I believe; but Horner's talents did not lie in humour, and his economical labours were totally uncongenial to the mind of Scott."

Before quitting Marmion and its critics, I ought to say that, like the Lay, this and the subsequent great poems were all first published in a splendid quarto form. The 2000 of the original Marmion, price a guinea and a half,

were disposed of in less than a month; and twelve octavo editions between 1808 and 1825, had carried the sale to upwards of 30,000 copies, before the author included it in the collection of his poetry with biographical prefaces in 1830; since which period there have been frequent reprints; making an aggregate legitimate circulation between 1808 and 1848 of about 60,000.

Ere the poem was published, a heavy task, begun earlier, and continued throughout its progress, had been nearly completed; and there appeared in the last week of April 1808, *The Works of John Dryden, now first collected; with notes historical, critical, and explanatory, and a Life of the Author.—Eighteen volumes 8vo.* This was the bold speculation of William Miller of Albemarle Street; and the editor's fee, at forty guineas the volume, was L.756. The bulk of the collection, the neglect into which a majority of the pieces had fallen, the obsoleteness of the party politics which had so largely exercised the author's pen, and the indecorum, not seldom running into flagrant indecency, by which transcendent genius had ministered to the appetites of a licentious age, all combined to make the warmest of Scott's admirers doubt whether even his skill and reputation would be found sufficient to ensure the success of this undertaking. It was, however, better received than any one, except perhaps the courageous bookseller himself, had anticipated. The entire work was reprinted in 1821;—since then the Life of Dryden has had its place in various editions of Scott's prose miscellanies; nor perhaps does that class of his writings include any piece which keeps a higher estimation.

This Dryden was criticised in the Edinburgh Review for October 1808, with great ability, and, on the whole, with admirable candour. The industry and perspicacity with which Scott had carried through his editorial researches and annotations were acknowledged in terms which, had he known the name of his reviewer, must have been doubly

gratifying; and it was confessed that, in the life of his author, he had corrected with patient honesty, and filled up with lucid and expansive detail, the sometimes careless and often naked outline of Johnson's masterly Essay. It would be superfluous to quote in this place a specimen of critical skill which has already enjoyed wide circulation, and which will hereafter, no doubt, be included in the miscellaneous prose works of HALLAM. The points of political faith on which that great writer dissents from the Editor of Dryden, would, even if I had the inclination to pursue such a discussion, lead me far astray from the immediate object of these pages; they embrace questions on which the best and wisest of our countrymen will probably continue to take opposite sides, as long as our past history excites a living interest, and our literature is that of an active nation. On the poetical character of Dryden, I think the editor and his critic will be found to have expressed substantially much the same judgment; when they appear to differ, the battle strikes me as being about words rather than things, as is likely to be the case when men of such abilities and attainments approach a subject remote from their personal passions. As might have been expected, the terse and dexterous reviewer has often the better in this logomachy; but when the balance is struck, we discover here, as elsewhere, that Scott's broad and masculine understanding had, by whatever happy hardihood, grasped the very result to which others win their way by the more cautious processes of logical investigation. While nothing has been found easier than to attack his details, his general views on critical questions have seldom, if ever, been successfully impugned.

I wish I could believe that Scott's labours had been sufficient to recall Dryden to his rightful station, not in the opinion of those who make literature the business or chief solace of their lives—for with them he had never forfeited it—but in the general favour of the intelligent public.

That such has been the case, however, the not rapid sale of two editions, aided as they were by the greatest of living names, can be no proof; nor have I observed among the numberless recent speculations of the English booksellers, a single reprint of even those tales, satires, and critical essays, not to be familiar with which would, in the last age, have been considered as disgraceful in any one making the least pretension to letters.

Scott's Biography of Dryden—the only life of a great poet which he has left us, and also his only detailed work on the personal fortunes of one to whom literature was a profession—was penned just when he had begun to apprehend his own destiny. On this point of view, forbidden to contemporary delicacy, we may now pause with blameless curiosity. Seriously as he must have in those days been revolving the hazards of literary enterprise, he could not, it is probable, have handled any subject of this class without letting out here and there thoughts and feelings proper to his own biographer's province; but, widely as he and his predecessor may appear to stand apart as regards some of the most important both of intellectual and moral characteristics, they had nevertheless many features of resemblance, both as men and as authors; and I doubt if the entire range of our annals could have furnished a theme more calculated to keep Scott's scrutinising interest awake, than that which opened on him as he contemplated step by step the career of Dryden. There are grave lessons which that story was not needed to enforce upon his mind: he required no such beacon to make him revolt from paltering with the dignity of woman, or the passions of youth, or insulting by splenetic levities the religious convictions of any portion of his countrymen. But Dryden's prostitution of his genius to the petty bitternesses of political warfare, and the consequences both as to the party he served, and the antagonists he provoked, might well supply matter for serious consideration to the author of the Melville song.

"Where," says Scott, "is the expert swordsman that does not delight in the flourish of his weapon? and a brave man will least of all withdraw himself from his ancient standard when the tide of battle beats against it." But he says also,—and I know enough of his own then recent experiences, in his intercourse with some who had been among his earliest and dearest associates, not to apply the language to the circumstances that suggested it—"He who keenly engages in political controversy must not only encounter the vulgar abuse which he may justly contemn, but the altered eye of friends whose regard is chilled." Nor, when he adds that "the protecting zeal of his party did not compensate Dryden for the loss of those whom he alienated in their service," can I help connecting this reflection too with his own subsequent abstinence from party personalities, in which, had the expert swordsman's delight in the flourish of his weapon prevailed, he might have rivalled the success of either Dryden or Swift, to be repaid like them by the settled rancour of Whigs and the jealous ingratitude of Tories.

It is curious enough to compare the hesitating style of his apology for that tinge of evanescent superstition which seems to have clouded occasionally Dryden's bright and solid mind, with the open avowal that he has "pride in recording his author's decided admiration of old ballads and popular tales;" and perhaps his personal feelings were hardly less his prompter where he dismisses with brief scorn the sins of negligence and haste which had been so often urged against Dryden. "Nothing," he says, "is so easily attained as the power of presenting the extrinsic qualities of fine painting, fine music, or fine poetry; the beauty of colour and outline, the combination of notes, the melody of versification, may be imitated by artists of mediocrity; and many will view, hear, or peruse their performances, without being able positively to discover why they should not, since composed according to all the rules, afford pleasure

equal to those of Raphael, Handel, or Dryden. The deficiency lies in the vivifying spirit, which, like *alcohol*, may be reduced to the same principle in all the fine arts. The French are said to possess the best possible rules for building ships of war, although not equally remarkable for their power of fighting them. When criticism becomes a pursuit separate from poetry, those who follow it are apt to forget that the legitimate ends of the art for which they lay down rules, are instruction and delight; and that these points being attained, by what road soever, entitles a poet to claim the prize of successful merit. Neither did the learned authors of these disquisitions sufficiently attend to the general disposition of mankind, which cannot be contented even with the happiest imitations of former excellence, but demands novelty as a necessary ingredient for amusement. To insist that every epic poem shall have the plan of the Iliad, and every tragedy be modelled by the rules of Aristotle, resembles the principle of the architect who should build all his houses with the same number of windows and of stories. It happened, too, inevitably, that the critics, in the plenipotential authority which they exercised, often assumed as indispensable requisites of the drama, or epopeia, circumstances which, in the great authorities they quoted, were altogether accidental or indifferent. These they erected into laws, and handed down as essential; although the forms prescribed have often as little to do with the merit and success of the original from which they are taken as the shape of the drinking glass with the flavour of the wine which it contains." These sentences appear, from the dates, to have been penned immediately after the biographer of Dryden had perused the Edinburgh Review on *Marmion*.

I conclude with a passage, in writing which he seems to have anticipated the only serious critical charge that was ever brought against his edition of Dryden as a whole—namely, the loose and irregular way in which his own

æsthetical notions are indicated, rather than expounded. "While Dryden," says Scott, "examined, discussed, admitted, or rejected the rules proposed by others, he forbore, from *prudence*, *indolence*, or *a regard for the freedom of Parnassus*, to erect himself into a legislator. His doctrines are scattered without system or pretence to it:—it is impossible to read far without finding some maxim for doing, or forbearing, which every student of poetry will do well to engrave upon the tablets of his memory; but the author's mode of instruction is neither harsh nor dictatorial."

On the whole, it is impossible to doubt that the success of Dryden in rapidly reaching, and till the end of a long life holding undisputed, the summit of public favour and reputation, in spite of his "brave neglect" of minute finishing, narrow laws, and prejudiced authorities, must have had a powerful effect in nerving Scott's hope and resolution for the wide ocean of literary enterprise into which he had now fairly launched his bark. Like Dryden, he felt himself to be "amply stored with acquired knowledge, much of it the fruits of early reading and application;" anticipated that though, "while engaged in the hurry of composition, or overcome by the lassitude of continued literary labour," he should sometimes "draw with too much liberality on a tenacious memory," no "occasional imperfections would deprive him of his praise;" in short, made up his mind that "pointed and nicely-turned lines, sedulous study, and long and repeated correction and revision" would all be dispensed with,—provided their place were supplied as in Dryden by "rapidity of conception, a readiness of expressing every idea without losing anything by the way—perpetual animation and elasticity of thought—and language never laboured, never loitering, never (in Dryden's own phrase) *cursedly confined.*"

I believe that Scott had, in 1807, agreed with London booksellers as to the superintendence of two other large collections, the Somers' Tracts and the Sadler State Papers;

but it seems that Constable first heard of these engagements when he accompanied the second cargo of Marmion to the great southern market; and, alarmed at the prospect of losing his hold on Scott's industry, he at once invited him to follow up his Dryden by an Edition of Swift on the same scale,—offering, moreover, to double the rate of payment; that is to say, to give him L.1500 for the new undertaking. This munificent tender was accepted; and as early as May 1808, I find Scott writing in all directions for books, pamphlets, and MSS., likely to be serviceable in illustrating the Life and Works of the Dean of St Patrick's. While these were accumulating about him, which they soon did in greater abundance than he had anticipated, he concluded his labours on Sadler, and kept pace, at the same time with Ballantyne, as the Somers' Tracts continued to move through the press. The Sadler was published in 1809, in three large volumes, quarto; but the last of the thirteen equally ponderous tomes to which Somers extended, was not dismissed from his desk until towards the conclusion of 1812.

He also edited this year, for Murray, Strutt's unfinished romance of Queenhoo-hall, with a conclusion in the fashion of the original; for Constable, Carleton's Memoirs of the War of the Spanish Succession, to which he gave a lively preface and various notes; and the Memoirs of Robert Cary, Earl of Monmouth. The republication of Carleton,[1] Johnson's eulogy of which fills a pleasant page in Boswell, had probably been suggested by the interest which Scott took in the first outburst of Spanish patriotism consequent on Napoleon's transactions at Bayonne. There is one passage in the preface which I must transcribe. Speaking

[1] It seems to be now pretty generally believed that *Carleton's Memoirs* were among the numberless fabrications of De Foe; but in this case (if the fact indeed be so), as in that of his *Cavalier*, he no doubt had before him the rude journal of some officer who had fought and bled in the campaigns described with such an air of truth.

of the absurd recall of Peterborough from the command in which he had exhibited such a wonderful combination of patience and prudence with military daring, he says:—"One ostensible reason was, that Peterborough's parts were of too lively and mercurial a quality, and that his letters shewed more wit than became a General;—a commonplace objection, raised by the dull malignity of commonplace minds, against those whom they see discharging with ease and indifference the tasks which they themselves execute (if at all) with the sweat of their brow and in the heaviness of their hearts. There is a certain hypocrisy in business, whether civil or military, as well as in religion, which they will do well to observe who, not satisfied with discharging their duty, desire also the good repute of men." It was not long before some of the dull malignants of the Parliament House began to insinuate what at length found a dull and dignified mouthpiece in the House of Commons—that if a Clerk of Session had any real business to do, it could not be done well by a man who found time for more literary enterprises than any other author of the age undertook—"wrote more books," Lord Archibald Hamilton serenely added, "than any body could find leisure to read"—and, moreover, mingled in general society as much as many that had no pursuit but pleasure.

The eager struggling of the different booksellers to engage Scott at this time, is a very amusing feature in the voluminous correspondence before me. Had he possessed treble the energy for which it was possible to give any man credit, he could never have encountered a tithe of the projects that the post brought day after day to him, announced with extravagant enthusiasm, and urged with all the arts of conciliation. I shall mention only one out of at least a dozen gigantic schemes which were thus proposed before he had well settled himself to his Swift; and I do so, because something of the kind was a few years later carried into execution. This was a General Edition of British Novelists,—

beginning with De Foe and reaching to the end of the last century—to be set forth with prefaces and notes by Scott, and printed of course by Ballantyne. The projector was Murray, who was now eager to start on all points in the race with Constable; but this was not, as we shall see presently, the only business that prompted my enterprising friend's first visit to Ashestiel.

Conversing with Scott, towards the end of his toils, about the tumult of engagements in which he was thus involved, he said, "Aye—it was enough to tear me to pieces—but there was a wonderful exhilaration about it all: my blood was kept at fever-pitch—I felt as if I could have grappled with anything and everything; then there was hardly one of all my schemes that did not afford me the means of serving some poor devil of a brother author. There were always huge piles of materials to be arranged, sifted, and indexed —volumes of extracts to be transcribed—journeys to be made hither and thither, for ascertaining little facts and dates,—in short, I could commonly keep half-a-dozen of the ragged regiment of Parnassus in tolerable case." I said he must have felt something like what a locomotive engine on a railway might be supposed to do, when a score of coal waggons are seen linking themselves to it the moment it gets the steam up, and it rushes on its course regardless of the burden. "Yes," said he, laughing, and making a crashing cut with his axe (for we were felling larches;) "but there was a cursed lot of dung carts too." He was seldom, in fact, without some of these appendages; and I admired nothing more in him than the patient courtesy, the unwearied gentle kindness with which he always treated them, in spite of their delays and blunders, to say nothing of the almost incredible vanity and presumption which more than one of them often exhibited in the midst of their fawning; and, I believe, with all their faults, the worst and weakest of them repaid him by a canine fidelity of affection. This part of Scott's character recalls by far the most pleasing

trait in that of his last predecessor in the plenitude of literary authority—Dr Johnson. There was perhaps nothing (except the one great blunder) that had a worse effect on the course of his pecuniary fortunes, than the readiness with which he exerted his interest with the booksellers on behalf of inferior writers. Even from the commencement of his connexion with Constable in particular, I can trace a continual series of such applications. They stimulated the already too sanguine publisher to numberless risks; and when these failed, the result was, in one shape or another, some corresponding deduction from the fair profits of his own literary labour. "I like well," Constable was often heard to say in the sequel, "I like well Scott's *ain bairns*—but heaven preserve me from those of his fathering!"

Every now and then, however, he had the rich compensation of finding that his interference had really promoted the interests of some meritorious obscure. None more meritorious could be named than John Struthers, a shoemaker of Glasgow, whose very striking poem, *The Poor Man's Sabbath*, being seen in MS. by Miss Joanna Baillie when on a visit to her native district, was by her recommended to Scott, and by him to Constable, who published it in 1808. Mr Struthers made a pilgrimage of gratitude to Ashestiel, where he was received with hearty kindness; and it is pleasing to add, that he ended his life in a very respectable position—as keeper of Stirling's Library, an old endowment in Glasgow.

James Hogg was by this time beginning to be appreciated; and the popularity of his *Mountain Bard* encouraged Scott to more strenuous intercession in his behalf. I have before me a long array of letters on this subject, which passed between Scott and the Earl of Dalkeith and his brother Lord Montagu, in 1808. Hogg's prime ambition at this period was to procure an ensigncy in a militia regiment, and he seems to have set little by Scott's representations that the pay of such a situation was very small,

and that, if he obtained it, he would probably find his relations with his brother officers far from agreeable. There was, however, another objection which Scott could not hint to the aspirant himself, but which seems to have been duly considered by those who were anxious to promote his views. Militia officers of that day were by no means unlikely to see their nerves put to the test; and the Shepherd's—though he wrote some capital war-songs, especially *Donald Macdonald*—were not heroically strung. This was in truth no secret among his early intimates, though he had not measured himself at all exactly on that score, and was even tempted, when he found there was no chance of the militia epaulette, to threaten that he would "list for a soldier" in a marching regiment. Notwithstanding at least one melancholy precedent, the Excise, which would have suited him almost as badly as "hugging Brown Bess," was next thought of; and the Shepherd himself seems to have entered into that plan with considerable alacrity: but I know not whether he changed his mind, or what other cause prevented such an appointment from taking place. After various shiftings, he at last obtained from the Duke of Buccleuch's kindness, the gratuitous life-rent of a small farm in the vale of Yarrow; and had he contented himself with the careful management of its fields, the rest of his days might have been easy. But he could not withstand the attractions of Edinburgh, which carried him away from Altrive for months every year; and when at home, a warm and hospitable disposition, so often stirred by vanity less pardonable than his, made him convert his cottage into an unpaid hostelrie for the reception of endless troops of thoughtless admirers; and thus, in spite of much help and much forbearance, he was never out of one set of pecuniary difficulties before he had begun to weave the meshes of some fresh entanglement. *In pace requiescat.* There will never be such an Ettrick Shepherd again.

In May 1808, Joanna Baillie spent a week or two under

Scott's roof in Edinburgh. Their acquaintance was thus knit into a deep and respectful affection on both sides; and henceforth they maintained a close epistolary correspondence, which will always be read with special interest. But within a few weeks after her departure, he was to commence another intimacy not less sincere and cordial; and one productive of a still more important series of his letters. He had now reached a period of life after which real friendships are but seldom formed; and it is fortunate that another with an Englishman of the highest class of accomplishments had been thoroughly compacted before death cut the ties between him and George Ellis—because his dearest intimates within Scotland had of course but a slender part in his written correspondence. Mr Morritt of Rokeby and his wife had long been intimate with Lady Louisa Stuart and Mr William Rose; and the meeting, therefore, had been well prepared for. It took place at Edinburgh in June. Scott shewed them the lions of the town and its vicinity, exactly as if he had nothing else to attend to but their gratification; and Mr Morritt recollected with particular pleasure one long day spent in rambling along the Esk by Roslin and Hawthornden,

Where Jonson sat in Drummond's social shade,

down to the old haunts of Lasswade. "When we approached that village," he writes,—"Scott, who had laid hold of my arm, turned along the road in a direction not leading to the place where the carriage was to meet us. After walking some minutes towards Edinburgh, I suggested that we were losing the scenery of the Esk, and, besides, had Dalkeith Palace yet to see. 'Yes,' said he, 'and I have been bringing you where there is little enough to be seen—only that Scotch cottage—(one by the road side, with a small garth)—but, though not worth looking at, I could not pass it. It was our first country-house when newly married, and many a contrivance we had to make it comfortable. I made a dining-table for it with my own

hands. Look at these two miserable willow-trees on either side the gate into the enclosure; they are tied together at the top to be an arch, and a cross made of two sticks over them is not yet decayed. To be sure, it is not much of a lion to shew a stranger; but I wanted to see it again myself, for I assure you that after I had constructed it, *mamma* (Mrs Scott) and I both of us thought it so fine, we turned out to see it by moonlight, and walked backwards from it to the cottage door, in admiration of our own magnificence and its picturesque effect. I did want to see if it was still there—so now we will look after the barouche, and make the best of our way to Dalkeith.' Such were the natural feelings that endeared the Author of Marmion and the Lay to those who saw him in 'the happier hour of social pleasure.' His person at that time may be exactly known from Raeburn's first picture, which had just been executed for his bookseller, Constable, and which was a most faithful likeness of him and his dog Camp. The literal fidelity of the portraiture, however, is its principal merit. The expression is serious and contemplative, very unlike the hilarity and vivacity then habitual to his speaking face, but quite true to what it was in the absence of such excitement. His features struck me at first as commonplace and heavy,—but they were almost always lighted up by the flashes of the mind within. This required a hand more masterly than Raeburn's; and indeed, in my own opinion, Chantrey alone has in his bust attained that, in his case, most difficult task of portraying the features faithfully, and yet giving the real and transient expression of the countenance when animated.

"We passed a week in Edinburgh, chiefly in his society and that of his friends the Mackenzies. We were so far on our way to Brahan Castle, in Ross-shire. Scott unlocked all his antiquarian lore, and supplied us with numberless *data*, such as no guide-book could have furnished, and such as his own Monkbarns might have delighted to

give. It would be idle to tell how much pleasure and instruction his advice added to a tour in itself so productive of both, as well as of private friendships and intimacies, now too generally terminated by death, but never severed by caprice or disappointment. His was added to the number by our reception now in Edinburgh, and, on our return from the Highlands, at Ashestiel—where he had made us promise to visit him, saying that the farm-house had pigeon-holes enough for such of his friends as could live, like him, on Tweed salmon and Forest mutton. There he was the cherished friend and kind neighbour of every middling Selkirkshire yeoman, just as easily as in Edinburgh he was the companion of clever youth and narrative old age in refined society. He carried us one day to Melrose Abbey or Newark—another, to course with mountain greyhounds by Yarrow braes or St Mary's Loch, repeating every ballad or legendary tale connected with the scenery—and on a third, we must all go to a farmer's *kirn*, or harvest-home, to dance with Border lasses on a barn floor, drink whisky punch, and enter with him into all the gossip and good fellowship of his neighbours, on a complete footing of unrestrained conviviality, equality, and mutual respect. His wife and happy young family were clustered round him, and the cordiality of his reception would have unbent a misanthrope.

"At this period his conversation was more equal and animated than any man's that I ever knew. It was most characterised by the extreme felicity and fun of his illustrations, drawn from the whole encyclopædia of life and nature, in a style sometimes too exuberant for written narrative, but which to him was natural and spontaneous. A hundred stories, always apposite, and often interesting the mind by strong pathos, or eminently ludicrous, were daily told, which, with many more, have since been transplanted, almost in the same language, into the Waverley novels and his other writings. These, and his recitations of

poetry, which can never be forgotten by those who knew him, made up the charm that his boundless memory enabled him to exert to the wonder of the gaping lovers of wonders. But equally impressive and powerful was the language of his warm heart, and equally wonderful were the conclusions of his vigorous understanding, to those who could return or appreciate either. Among a number of such recollections, I have seen many of the thoughts which then passed through his mind embodied in the delightful prefaces annexed late in life to his poetry and novels. Those on literary quarrels and literary irritability are exactly what he then expressed. Keenly enjoying literature as he did, and indulging his own love of it in perpetual composition, he always maintained the same estimate of it as subordinate and auxiliary to the purposes of life, and rather talked of men and events than of books and criticism. Literary fame, he always said, was a bright feather in the cap, but not the substantial cover of a well-protected head. This sound and manly feeling was what I have seen described by some of his biographers as *pride;* and it will always be thought so by those whose own *vanity* can only be gratified by the admiration of others, and who mistake shows for realities. None valued the love and applause of others more than Scott; but it was to the love and applause of those he valued in return that he restricted the feeling—without restricting the kindness. Men who did not, or would not, understand this, perpetually mistook him—and, after loading him with undesired eulogy, perhaps in his own house neglected common attention or civility to other parts of his family. It was on such an occasion that I heard him murmur in my ear, 'Author as I am, I wish these good people would recollect that I began with being a gentleman, and don't mean to give up the character.' Such was all along his feeling, and this, with a slight prejudice common to Scotchmen in favour of ancient and respectable family descent, constituted what in

Grub Street is called his *pride*. It was, at least, what Johnson would have justly called *defensive* pride. From all other, and still more from mere vanity, I never knew any man so remarkably free."

The farmer at whose annual *kirn* Scott and all his household were, in those days, regular guests, was Mr Laidlaw, the Duke of Buccleuch's tenant on the lands of Peel, which are only separated from the eastern terrace of Ashestiel by the ravine and its brook. Mr Laidlaw was himself possessed of some landed property in the same neighbourhood, and being considered as wealthy, and fond of his wealth, he was usually called among the country people *Laird Nippy;* an expressive designation which it would be difficult to translate. Though a very dry, demure, and taciturn old Presbyterian, he could not resist the Sheriff's jokes; nay he even gradually subdued his scruples so far as to become a pretty constant attendant at his "*English printed prayers*" on the Sundays; which, indeed, the parish-kirk being eight miles distant, attracted by degrees more neighbours than quite suited the capacity of the parlour-chapel. Mr Laidlaw's wife was a woman of superior mind and manners—a great reader, and one of the few to whom Scott liked lending his books; for most strict and delicate was he always in the care of them, and indeed, hardly any trivial occurrence ever seemed to touch his temper at all, except anything like irreverent treatment of a book. The intercourse between the family at Ashestiel and this worthy woman and her children, was a constant interchange of respect and kindness; but I remember to have heard Scott say that the greatest compliment he had ever received in his life was from the rigid old farmer himself; for, years after he had left Ashestiel, he discovered casually that special care had been taken to keep the turf seat on *the Shirra's knowe* in good repair; and this was much from Nippy.

And here I must set down a story, which, most readers

will smile to be told, was often repeated by Scott, and always with an air that seemed to me, in spite of his endeavours to the contrary, as grave as the usual aspect of Laird Nippy of the Peel. This neighbour was a distant kinsman of his dear friend William Laidlaw;—so distant, that elsewhere in that condition they would scarcely have remembered any community of blood;—but they both traced their descent, in the ninth degree, to an ancestress who, in the days of John Knox, fell into trouble from a suspicion of witchcraft. In her time the Laidlaws were rich and prosperous, and held rank among the best gentry of Tweeddale; but in some evil hour, her husband, the head of his blood, reproached her with her addiction to the black art, and she, in her anger, cursed the name and lineage of Laidlaw. Her youngest son, who stood by, implored her to revoke the malediction; but in vain. Next day, however, on the renewal of his entreaties, she carried him with her into the woods, made him slay a heifer, sacrificed it to the power of evil in his presence, and then, collecting the ashes in her apron, invited the youth to see her commit them to the river. "Follow them," said she, "from stream to pool, as long as they float visible, and as many streams as you shall then have passed, for so many generations shall your descendants prosper. After that, they shall, like the rest of the name, be poor, and take their part in my curse." The streams he counted were nine; "and now," Scott would say, "look round you in this country, and sure enough the Laidlaws are one and all landless men, with the single exception of Auld Nippy!" Many times had I heard both him and William Laidlaw tell this story, before any suspicion got abroad that Nippy's wealth rested on insecure foundations. Year after year, we never escorted a stranger by the Peel, but I heard the tale;—and at last it came with a new conclusion;—"and now, think whatever we choose of it, my good friend Nippy is landless." He had sold his own land and quitted the Peel.

Mr Morritt's mention of the "happy young family clustered round him" at Mr Laidlaw's *kirn*, reminds me that I ought to say a few words on Scott's method of treating his children in their early days. He had now two boys and two girls;[1]—and he never had more. He was not one of those who take much delight in a mere infant; but no father ever devoted more time and tender care to his offspring than he did to each of his, as they reached the age when they could listen to him, and understand his talk. Like their playmates, Camp and the greyhounds, they had at all times free access to his study; he never considered their prattle as any disturbance; they went and came as pleased their fancy; he was always ready to answer their questions; and when they, unconscious how he was engaged, entreated him to lay down his pen and tell them a story, he would take them on his knee, repeat a ballad or a legend, kiss them, and set them down again to their marbles or ninepins, and resume his labour, as if refreshed by the interruption. From a very early age he made them dine at table, and "to sit up to supper" was the great reward when they had been "very good bairns." In short, he considered it as the highest duty as well as the sweetest pleasure of a parent to be the companion of his children; he partook all their little joys and sorrows, and made his kind unformal instructions to blend so easily and playfully with the current of their own sayings and doings, that so far from regarding him with any distant awe, it was never thought that any sport or diversion could go on in the right way, unless *papa* were of the party, or that the rainiest day could be dull, so he were at home.

Of the irregularity of his own education he speaks with regret, in the autobiographical fragment written this year at Ashestiel; yet his practice does not look as it

[1] Charlotte Sophia, born in October 1799; Walter, October 1801; Anne, February 1803; Charles, December 1805.

that feeling had been strongly rooted in his mind ;—for he never did shew much concern about regulating systematically what is usually called *education* in the case of his children. It seemed, on the contrary, as if he attached little importance to anything else, so he could perceive that the young curiosity was excited—the intellect, by whatever springs of interest, set in motion. He detested and despised the whole generation of modern children's books, in which the attempt is made to convey accurate notions of scientific minutiæ : delighting cordially, on the other hand, in those of the preceding age, which, addressing themselves chiefly to the imagination, obtain through it, as he believed, the best chance of stirring our graver faculties also. He exercised the memory by selecting for tasks of recitation passages of popular verse the most likely to catch the fancy of children ; and gradually familiarized them with the ancient history of their own country, by arresting attention, in the course of his own oral narrations, on incidents and characters of a similar description. Nor did he neglect to use the same means of quickening curiosity as to the events of sacred history. On Sunday he never rode—at least not until his growing infirmity made his pony almost necessary to him—for it was his principle that all domestic animals have a full right to their Sabbath of rest ; but after he had read the prayers and lessons of the day, he usually walked with his whole family, dogs included, to some favourite spot at a considerable distance from the house—most frequently the ruined tower of Elibank—and there dined with them in the open air on a basket of cold provisions, mixing his wine with the water of the brook beside which they all were grouped around him on the turf ; and here, or at home, if the weather kept them from their ramble, his Sunday talk was just such a series of biblical lessons as that which we have preserved for the permanent use of rising generations, in his Tales of a Grand-

father on the early history of Scotland. I wish he had committed that other series to writing too;—how different that would have been from our thousand compilations of dead epitome and imbecile cant! He had his Bible, the Old Testament especially, by heart; and on these days inwove the simple pathos or sublime enthusiasm of Scripture, in whatever story he was telling, with the same picturesque richness as in his week-day tales the quaint Scotch of Pitscottie, or some rude romantic old rhyme from Barbour's Bruce or Blind Harry's Wallace.

By many external accomplishments, either in girl or boy, he set little store. He delighted to hear his daughters sing an old ditty, or one of his own framing; but, so the singer appeared to feel the spirit of her ballad, he was not at all critical of the technical execution. There was one thing, however, on which he fixed his heart hardly less than the ancient Persians of the Cyropædia: like them, next to love of truth, he held love of horsemanship for the prime point of education. As soon as his eldest girl could sit a pony, she was made the regular attendant of his mountain rides; and they all, as they attained sufficient strength, had the like advancement. He taught them to think nothing of tumbles, and habituated them to his own reckless delight in perilous fords and flooded streams; and they all imbibed in great perfection his passion for horses—as well, I may venture to add, as his deep reverence for the more important article of that Persian training. "Without courage," he said, "there cannot be truth; and without truth there can be no other virtue."

He had a horror of boarding-schools; never allowed his girls to learn anything out of his own house; and chose their governess—Miss Miller—who about this time was domesticated with them, and never left them while they needed one,—with far greater regard to her kind good temper and excellent moral and religious principles, than

to the measure of her attainments in what are called fashionable accomplishments. The admirable system of education for boys in Scotland combines all the advantages of public and private instruction; his carried their satchels to the High-School, when the family was in Edinburgh, just as he had done before them, and shared of course the evening society of their happy home. But he rarely, if ever, left them in town, when he could himself be in the country; and at Ashestiel he was, for better or for worse, his eldest boy's daily tutor, after he began Latin.

His letters of this autumn to such friends as Rose, Morritt, and Miss Baillie, give additional details of the pleasant domestic life of Ashestiel. In one (Sept.) he says to Miss Joanna:—"If you ask what I am doing, I am very like a certain ancient king, distinguished in the Edda, who, when Lok paid him a visit,—

> Was twisting of collars his dogs to hold,
> And combing the mane of his courser bold.

If this idle man's employment required any apology, we must seek it in the difficulty of seeking food to make savoury messes for our English guests; for we are eight miles from market, and must call in all the country sports to aid the larder." Scott, however, had business enough at this time, besides combing the mane of Brown Adam, and twisting couples for Douglas and Percy. He was deep in Swift; and the Ballantyne press was groaning under a multitude of works, with almost all of which his hand as well as his head had something, more or less, to do. But a serious change was about to take place in his relations with the spirited publishing house which had hitherto been the most efficient supporters of that press; and his letters begin to be much occupied with disputes which cost him many anxious hours in the apparently idle autumn of 1808. Mr Constable had then for his partner Mr Hunter, afterwards Laird of Blackness, to whose intemperate language, much more than to any part of Constable's own conduct,

Scott ascribed this unfortunate alienation; which, however, as well as most of my friend's subsequent misadventures, I am inclined to trace in no small degree to the influence which a third person, hitherto unnamed, was about this time beginning to exercise over the concerns of James Ballantyne.

John Ballantyne, a younger brother of Scott's schoolfellow, was originally destined for the paternal trade of a *merchant*—(that is to say, a dealer in everything from fine broadcloth to children's tops)—at Kelso. The father seems to have sent him when very young to London, where, whatever else he may have done in the way of professional training, he spent some time in the banking-house of Messrs Currie. On returning to Kelso, however, the "*department*" which more peculiarly devolved upon him was the tailoring one.[1] His personal habits had not been improved by his brief sojourn in the Great City, and the business, in consequence (by his own statement) of the irregularity of his life, gradually melted to nothing in his hands. Early in 1805, his goods were sold off, and barely sufficed to pay his debts. The worthy old couple found refuge with their ever affectionate eldest son, who provided his father with some little occupation (real or nominal) about the printing office; and thus John himself again quitted his native place, under circumstances which, as I shall shew in the sequel, had left a deep and painful trace even upon that volatile mind. He had, however, some taste, and he at least fancied himself to have some talent for literature;[2] and the rise of his brother, who also had met with no success in his original profession, was before him. He had

[1] The first time that William Laidlaw saw John Ballantyne, he had come to Selkirk to measure the troopers of the Yeomanry Cavalry, of whom Laidlaw was one, for new breeches.

[2] John Ballantyne, upon the marvellous success of Waverley, wrote and published a wretched novel, called "The Widow's Lodgings."

acquired in London great apparent dexterity in book-keeping and accounts. He was married by this time; and it might naturally be hoped, that with the severe lessons of the past, he would now apply sedulously to any duty that might be entrusted to him. The concern in the Canongate was a growing one, and James Ballantyne's somewhat indolent habits were already severely tried by its management. The Company offered John a salary of £200 a-year as clerk; and the destitute ex-*merchant* was too happy to accept the proposal.

He was a quick, active, intrepid little fellow; and in society so very lively and amusing, so full of fun and merriment — such a thoroughly light-hearted droll, all-over quaintness and humorous mimicry; and moreover, such a keen and skilful devotee to all manner of field-sports, from fox-hunting to badger-baiting inclusive, that it was no wonder he should have made a favourable impression on Scott, when he appeared in Edinburgh in this destitute plight, and offered to assist James in book-keeping, which the latter never understood, or could bring himself to attend to with regularity. The contrast between the two brothers was not the least of the amusement; indeed that continued to amuse him to the last. The elder of these is painted to the life in an early letter of Leyden's, which, on the Doctor's death, he, though not (I fancy) without wincing, permitted Scott to print:—" Methinks I see you with your confounded black beard, bull-neck, and upper lip turned up to your nose, while one of your eyebrows is cocked perpendicularly, and the other forms pretty well the base of a right-angled triangle, opening your great gloating eyes, and crying—*But Leyden!!!*" James was a short, stout, well-made man, and would have been considered a handsome one, but for these grotesque frowns, starts, and twistings of his features, set off by a certain mock majesty of walk and gesture, which he had perhaps contracted from his usual companions, the emperors and

tyrants of the stage. His voice in talk was grave and sonorous, and he sung well (theatrically well), in a fine rich bass. John's tone in singing was a sharp treble—in conversation something between a croak and a squeak. Of *his* style of story-telling it is sufficient to say that the late Charles Mathews's "old Scotch lady" was but an imperfect copy of the original, which the great comedian first heard in my presence from his lips.[1] He was shorter than James, but lean as a scarecrow, and he rather hopped than walked; his features, too, were naturally good, and he twisted them about quite as much, but in a very different fashion. The elder brother was a gourmand—the younger liked his bottle and his bowl, as well as, like Johnny Armstrong, "a hawk, a hound, and a fair woman." Scott used to call the one Aldiborontiphoscophornio—the other Rigdumfunnidos. They both entertained him; they both loved and revered him; and I believe would have shed their heart's blood in his service; but James had serious deficiencies as a man of business, and John was not likely to supply them. A more reckless, thoughtless, improvident adventurer never rushed into the serious responsibilities of commerce; but his cleverness, his vivacity, his unaffected zeal, his gay fancy always seeing the light side of every thing, his imperturbable good-humour, and buoyant elasticity of spirits, made and kept him such a favourite, that I believe Scott would have as soon have ordered his dog to be hanged, as harboured, in his darkest hour of perplexity, the least thought of discarding "jocund Johnny."

The great bookseller of Edinburgh was a man of calibre infinitely beyond the Ballantynes. Though with a strong dash of the sanguine (without which, indeed, there can be no great projector in any walk of life), Archibald Constable was one of the most sagacious persons that ever followed

[1] The reader will find an amusing anecdote of Johnny in the Memoirs of Matthews, by his widow, vol. ii. p. 382.

his profession. Mr Thomas Campbell writes to Scott, a year or two before this time,—"Our butteracious friend at the Cross turns out a deep draw-well;" and another eminent literator, still more closely connected with Constable, had already, I believe, christened him "The Crafty." Indeed, his fair and very handsome physiognomy carried a bland astuteness of expression, not to be mistaken by any who could read the plainest of nature's handwriting. He made no pretensions to literature—though he was in fact a tolerable judge of it generally, and particularly well skilled in the department of Scotch antiquities. He distrusted himself, however, in such matters, being conscious that his early education had been very imperfect; and moreover, he wisely considered the business of a critic as quite as much out of his "proper line" as authorship itself. But of that "proper line," and his own qualifications for it, his estimation was ample; and—often as I may have smiled at the lofty serenity of his self-complacence—I confess I now doubt whether he rated himself too highly as a master in the true science of the bookseller. He had, indeed, in his mercantile character one deep and fatal flaw—for he hated accounts, and systematically refused, during the most vigorous years of his life, to examine or sign a balance-sheet; but for casting a keen eye over the remotest indications of popular taste—for anticipating the chances of success and failure in any given variety of adventure—for the planning and invention of his calling—he was not, in his own day at least, surpassed; and among all his myriad of undertakings, I question if any one that really originated with himself, and continued to be superintended by his own care, ever did fail. He was as bold as far-sighted—and his disposition was as liberal as his views were wide. Had he and Scott from the beginning trusted as thoroughly as they understood each other; had there been no third parties to step in, flattering an overweening vanity on the one hand into presumption, and on the other side spur-

ring the enterprise that wanted nothing but a bridle, I have no doubt their joint career might have been one of unbroken prosperity. But the Ballantynes were jealous of the superior mind, bearing, and authority of Constable; and though he too had a liking for them both personally—esteemed James's literary tact, and was far too much of a humourist not to be very fond of the younger brother's company—he could never away with the feeling that they intervened unnecessarily, and left him but the shadow, where he ought to have had the substantial lion's share, of confidence. On his part, again, he was too proud a man to give entire confidence where that was withheld from himself.

But in tracing the progress of the coldness which this year advanced to a complete rupture, it must be especially kept in mind that the Edinburgh Review had been the great primary source of the wealth and influence of the house of Constable. The then comparatively little-known bookseller of London, who was destined to be ultimately its most formidable rival in more than one department, has told me, that when he read the article on Marmion, and another on general politics in the same Number, he said to himself—"Walter Scott has feelings both as a gentleman and a Tory, which these people must now have wounded;—the alliance between him and the whole clique of the Review, its proprietor included, is shaken;" and, as far at least as the political part of the affair was concerned, John Murray's sagacity was not at fault. We have seen with what thankful alacrity he accepted a small share in the adventure of Marmion—and with what brilliant success that was crowned; nor is it wonderful that a young bookseller, conscious of ample energies, should now have watched with eagerness the circumstances which seemed not unlikely to place within his own reach a more intimate connexion with the first great living author in whose works he had ever had any direct interest. He forthwith took measures for improving and extending

his relations with James Ballantyne, through whom, as he guessed, Scott could best be approached. His tenders of employment for the Canongate press were such that the apparent head of the firm proposed a conference at Ferrybridge in Yorkshire; and there Murray, after detailing some of his own literary plans—particularly that already alluded to, of a Novelist's Library—in his turn sounded Ballantyne so far as to resolve on pursuing his journey into Scotland. Ballantyne had said enough to satisfy him that the project of setting up a new publishing house in Edinburgh, in opposition to Constable, was already all but matured; and he, on the instant, proposed himself for its active co-operator in the metropolis. The printer proceeded to open his budget farther, mentioning, among other things, that the author of Marmion had "both another Scotch poem and a *Scotch novel* on the stocks;" and had moreover chalked out the design of an Edinburgh Annual Register, to be conducted in opposition to the politics and criticism of Constable's Review. These tidings might have been enough to make Murray proceed farther northwards; but there was a scheme of his own which had for some time deeply occupied his mind, and the last article of this communication determined him to embrace the opportunity of opening it in person at Ashestiel. He arrived there about the middle of October. The 26th Number of the Edinburgh Review, containing Mr Brougham's article entitled "Don Cevallos on the usurpation of Spain," had just been published; and one of the first things Scott mentioned in conversation was, that he had so highly resented the tone of that essay, as to give orders that his name might be discontinued on the list of subscribers.[1] Mr Murray could not have wished better auspices for the

[1] When the 26th Number appeared, Mr Scott wrote to Constable in these terms:—"The Edinburgh Review *had* become such as to render it impossible for me to continue a contributor to it.—*Now*, it is such as I can no longer continue to receive or read it." The

matter he had come to open; it was no other than the project of a London Review on the scale of the Edinburgh; and, for weeks ensuing, Scott's letters to Ellis, Morritt, and other literary Tories, attest with what eager zeal he had embraced the new scheme.

It is impossible to include more than a fragment of this copious and curious correspondence in the present narrative; but the first letter to Ellis (Nov. 2) seems to contain, in a few sentences, a sufficiently intelligible summary of his main views. He says:—"The present Ministry are not all that I could wish them—for (Canning excepted) I doubt there is among them too much *self-seeking*, as it was called in Cromwell's time; and what is their misfortune, if not their fault, there is not among them one in the decided situation of paramount authority, both with respect to the others and to the Crown, which is, I think, necessary, at least in difficult times, to produce promptitude, regularity, and efficiency in measures of importance. But their political principles are sound English principles, and, compared to the greedy and inefficient horde which preceded them, they are angels of light and of purity. It is obvious, however, that they want defenders both in and out doors. Pitt's

——'Love and fear glued many friends to him;
And now he 's fallen, those tough commixtures melt.'[1]

Were this only to affect a change of hands, I should expect it with more indifference; but I fear a change of principles is designed. The Edinburgh Review tells you coolly, 'We foresee a speedy revolution in this country, as well as Mr Cobbett;' and, to say the truth, by degrading the person of the Sovereign—exalting the power of the French armies, and the wisdom of their counsels—holding forth that peace (which they allow can only be purchased by the humiliating

list of the then subscribers exhibits, in an indignant dash of Constable's pen opposite Mr Scott's name, the word "STOPT!!!" —*R. Cadell.*

[1] See 3*d K. Henry IV.* Act II. Scene 6.

prostration of our honour) is indispensable to the very existence of this country—I think, that for these two years past, they have done their utmost to hasten the accomplishment of their own prophecy. Of this work 9000 copies are printed quarterly, and no genteel family *can* pretend to be without it, because, independent of its politics, it gives the only valuable literary criticism which can be met with. Consider, of the numbers who read this work, how many are likely to separate the literature from the politics—how many youths are there upon whose minds the flashy and bold character of the work is likely to make an indelible impression. Now, I think there is balm in Gilead for all this; and that the cure lies in instituting such a Review in London as should be conducted totally independent of bookselling influence, on a plan as liberal as that of the Edinburgh, its literature as well supported, and its principles English and constitutional. Accordingly, I have been given to understand that Mr William Gifford is willing to become the conductor of such a work, and I have written to him a very voluminous letter on the subject. Now, should this plan succeed, you must hang your birding-piece on its hooks, take down your old Anti-jacobin armour, and 'remember your swashing blow.' In point of learning, you Englishmen have ten times our scholarship; and as for talent and genius, 'Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than any of the rivers in Israel?' Have we not yourself and your cousin, the Roses, Malthus, Matthias, Gifford, Heber, and his brother? Can I not procure you a score of blue-caps, who would rather write for us than for the Edinburgh Review if they got as much pay by it? 'A good plot, good friends, and full of expectation—an excellent plot, very good friends!'"[1]

The excellent plot had too many good friends to be long a secret; nor could the rumours of Scott's share in it and other new schemes tend to soothe the irritation between

[1] Hotspur—1*st K. Henry IV.* Act II. Scene 3.

him and the house of Constable. Something occurred before the end of 1808 which induced Scott to suspect that among other sources of uneasiness had been a repentant grudge as to their bargain about Swift; and on the 2d of January 1809, I find him requesting, that if, on reflection, they thought they had hastily committed themselves, the deed might be cancelled. To this the firm did not assent: their letter expresses regret that Scott should have attached importance to "an unguarded expression" of the junior partner, "our Mr Hunter," and the hope that "the old footing may be restored hereafter, when the misrepresentations of interested persons may cease to be remembered." Scott replies coldly, requesting that a portrait for which he had sat to Raeburn may be considered as done for himself, charged to his account, and sent to him. Mr Constable declined, in very handsome terms, to give up the picture. But for the present the breach was complete. Among other negotiations which Scott had patronised twelve months before, was one concerning the publication of Miss Seward's Poems. On the 19th of March, he writes as follows to that lady:—"Constable, like many other folks who learn to undervalue the means by which they have risen, has behaved, or rather suffered his partner to behave, very uncivilly towards me. But they may both live to know that they should not have kicked down the ladder till they were sure of their footing. The very last time I spoke to him on business was about your poems. I understood him to decline your terms; but I had neither influence to change his opinion, nor inclination to interfere with his resolution. He is a very enterprising, and, I believe, a thoroughly honest man, but his vanity in some cases overpowers his discretion."

"Our Mr Hunter" was, I am told by friends of mine who knew him well, a man of considerable intelligence and accomplishments, to whose personal connexions the house of Constable owed a great accession of business and influ-

ence. He was, however, a very keen politician—in Scott's phrase, "a sort of Whig gone mad;"—regarded Scott's Toryism with a fixed bitterness; and, moreover, could never conceal his impression that Scott ought to have embarked in no other literary undertakings whatever until he had completed his edition of Swift. It is not wonderful that, not having been bred regularly to the bookselling business, he should have somewhat misapprehended the obligation which Scott had incurred when the bargain for that work was made; and his feeling of his own station and consequence was no doubt such as to give his style of conversation, on doubtful questions of business, a tone for which Scott had not been prepared by his previous intercourse with Mr Constable. The defection of the poet was, however, at once regretted and resented by both these partners; and Constable, I am told, often vented his wrath in figures as lofty as Scott's own. "Ay," he would say, stamping on the ground with a savage smile, "Ay, there is such a thing as rearing the oak until it can support itself."

The project of the Quarterly Review was not the only declaration of hostilities. The scheme of starting a new bookselling house in Edinburgh, begun in the short-sighted heat of pique, had now been matured;—I cannot add, either with composed observation or rational forecast—for it was ultimately settled that the ostensible and chief managing partner should be a person without capital, and neither by training nor by temper in the smallest degree qualified for such a situation; more especially where the field was to be taken against long experience, consummate skill, and resources which, if not so large as all the world supposed them, were still in comparison vast, and admirably organized. The rash resolution was, however, carried into effect, and a deed, deposited for secrecy's sake in the hands of Scott, laid the foundation of the firm of "John Ballantyne & Co., booksellers, Edinburgh." Scott appears to have

supplied all the capital, at any rate his own *one-half* share, and *one-fourth*, the portion of James, who, not having any funds to spare, must have become indebted to some one for it. It does not appear from what source John acquired his, the remaining *fourth*; but *Rigdumfunnidos* was thus installed in Hanover Street as the avowed rival of "The Crafty."

This was arranged in January. Under the same month I must mention an event often alluded to in its correspondence:—the death of Camp, the first of several dogs whose names will be "freshly remembered" as long as their master's works are popular. This favourite preserved his affection and sagacity to the last. At Ashestiel, as the servant was laying the cloth for dinner, he would say, "Camp, my good fellow, the Sheriff's coming home by the ford—or by the hill;" and the sick animal would immediately bestir himself to welcome his master, going out at the back door or the front door according to the direction given, and advancing as far as he was able, either towards the Tweed, or the Glenkinnon burn. He was buried on a fine moon-light night, in the little garden behind the house in Castle Street, immediately opposite to the window at which Scott usually sat writing. My wife told me that she remembered the whole family standing in tears about the grave, as her father himself smoothed down the turf above Camp with the saddest expression of face she had ever seen in him. He had been engaged to dine abroad that day, but apologized on account of "the death of a dear old friend;" and Mr Macdonald Buchanan was not at all surprised that he should have done so, when it came out next morning that Camp was no more.

CHAPTER VI.

London—Theatrical Anecdotes—Byron's Satire—The Lady of the Lake—Excursion to the Hebrides—Vision of Don Roderick—Byron—Davy—Crabbe—Purchase of Abbotsford—1809–1812.

In February Mr John Ballantyne proceeded to London, for the purpose of introducing himself to the chief publishers there in his new capacity, and especially of taking Mr Murray's instructions respecting the Scotch management of the Quarterly Review. As soon as the spring vacation began, Mr and Mrs Scott followed him by sea. They stayed two months, and this being the first visit to town since his fame had been crowned by Marmion, he was more than ever the object of curiosity and attention. Mr Morritt saw much of him, and I transcribe a few sentences from his *Memoranda* of the period.

"Scott," his friend says, "more correctly than any other man I ever knew, appreciated the value of that apparently enthusiastic *engouement* which the world of London shews to the fashionable wonder of the year. The homage paid him neither altered his opinions, nor produced the affectation of despising it; on the contrary, he received it, cultivated it, and repaid it in its own coin. 'All this is very flattering,' he would say, 'and very civil; and if people are amused with hearing me tell a parcel of old stories, or recite a pack of ballads to lovely young girls and gaping matrons, they are easily pleased, and a man would be very ill-natured who would not give pleasure so cheaply conferred.' If he dined with us and found any new faces, 'Well, do you want me to play lion to-day?' was his usual

question—'I will roar if you like it to your heart's content.' He would, indeed, in such cases put forth all his inimitable powers of entertainment—and day after day surprise me by their unexpected extent and variety. Then, as the party dwindled, and we were left alone, he laughed at himself, quoted—'Yet know that I one Snug the joiner am—no lion fierce,' &c.—and was at once himself again.

"He often lamented the injurious effects for literature and genius resulting from the excitement of ambition for this ephemeral *reputation du salon*. 'It may be a pleasant gale to sail with,' he said, 'but it never yet led to a port that I should like to anchor in;' nor did he willingly endure, either in London or in Edinburgh, the little exclusive circles of literary society, much less their occasional fastidiousness and petty partialities. One story which I heard of him from Dr Howley, now Archbishop of Canterbury (for I was not present), was very characteristic. The Doctor was one of a grand congregation of lions, where Scott and Coleridge, *cum multis aliis*, attended at Sotheby's. Poets and poetry were the topics of the table, and there was plentiful recitation of effusions as yet unpublished, which of course obtained abundant applause. Coleridge repeated more than one, which, as Dr H. thought, were eulogized by some of the company with something like affectation, and a desire to humble Scott by raising a poet of inferior reputation on his shoulders. Scott, however, joined in the compliments as cordially as anybody, until, in his turn, he was invited to display some of his occasional poetry. Scott said he had nothing of his own worth their hearing, but he would repeat a little copy of verses which he had shortly before seen in a provincial newspaper, and which seemed to him almost as good as anything they had been listening to. He repeated 'Fire, Famine, and Slaughter.' The applauses that ensued were faint—then came slight criticisms, from which Scott defended the unknown author. At last a more

bitter antagonist opened, and fastening upon one line, cried, 'This at least is absolute nonsense.' Scott denied the charge—the Zoilus persisted—until Coleridge, out of all patience, exclaimed, 'For God's sake let Mr Scott alone—I wrote the poem.'

"He often complained of the dullness of parties where each guest arrived under the implied obligation of exhibiting some extraordinary powers of talk or wit. 'If,' he said, 'I encounter men of the world, men of business, odd or striking characters of professional excellence in any department, I am in my element, for they cannot lionize me without my returning the compliment and learning something from them.' He was much with George Ellis, Canning, and Croker, and delighted in them—as indeed who did not?—but he loved to study eminence of every class and sort, and his rising fame gave him easy access to gratify all his curiosity."

The meetings with Canning, Croker, and Ellis, to which Morritt alludes, were, as may be supposed, chiefly occupied with the affairs of the Quarterly Review. The first number appeared while Scott was in London: and contained three articles from his pen.

On his way back to Scotland, he spent some days more with Morritt, at Rokeby Park, on the northern boundary of Yorkshire; and he was so delighted by the scenery of the rivers Tees and Greta, which have their confluence within the demesne, and so interested with his host's traditionary anecdotes of the Cavaliers of the Rokeby lineage, that he resolved on connecting a poem with these fair landscapes. But he had already, I presume, begun the Lady of the Lake; for, on his arrival at Edinburgh, he undertook that it should be finished by the end of the year. In July he revisited all the localities so dear to him in the days of his juvenile rambling, which he had chosen for the scene of his fable. He gave a week to Cambusmore, and ascertained, in his own person, that a good horseman might

gallop from Loch Vennachar to Stirling within the space allotted to Fitz-James. He then, under the guidance of Mr Macdonald Buchanan, explored Loch Lomond, Arrochar, Loch Sloy, and all the scenery of a hundred conflicts between the Macfarlanes, the Colquhouns, and the Clan Alpine. At Buchanan House, which is very near Ross Priory, Lady Douglas and Lady Louisa Stuart were visiting the Duke of Montrose; he joined them there, and read to them the Stag Chase, which he had just completed under the full influence of the *genius loci.*

It was at Buchanan that he first saw Lord Byron's "English Bards and Scotch Reviewers." I need not reprint here what he says in an essay in 1830, on his "share in the flagellation of that famous satire," viz.—

> Next view in state, proud prancing on his roan,
> The golden-crested haughty Marmion,—

down to

> For this we spurn Apollo's venal son,
> And bid a long *good-night to Marmion.*

But it is amusing enough to contrast with that graceful "Introduction" the plain words of a letter to Southey, written in August 1809. He there says:—"If I were once in possession of my reversionary income, I would do nothing but what I pleased, which might be another phrase for doing very little. I was always an admirer of the modest wish of a retainer in one of Beaumont and Fletcher's plays—

> 'I would not be a serving man, to carry the cloak-bag still,
> Nor would I be a falconer, the greedy hawks to fill;
> But I would be in a good house, and have a good master too,
> For I would eat and drink of the best, and *no* work would I do.'[1]

In the meantime, it is funny enough to see a whelp of a young Lord Byron abusing me, of whose circumstances he knows nothing, for endeavouring to scratch out a living

[1] *The Knight of the Burning Pestle.*

with my pen. God help the bear, if, having little else to eat, he must not even suck his own paws. I can assure the noble imp of fame it is not my fault that I was not born to a park and L.5000 a-year, as it is not his lordship's merit, although it may be his great good fortune, that he was not born to live by his literary talents or success."

About this time several travesties of Scott's poetry, I do not recollect by whom, were favourably noticed in some of the minor reviews, and appear to have annoyed Mr Morritt. Scott's only remark on *The Lay of the Scotch Fiddle*, &c. &c. is in a very miscellaneous letter to that friend:—"As to those terrible parodies which have come forth, I can only say with Benedict, *A college of such wit-mongers cannot flout me out of my humour*. Had I been conscious of one place about my temper, were it even, metaphorically speaking, the tip of my heel, vulnerable to this sort of aggression, I have that respect for mine own ease, that I would have shunned being a candidate for public applause, as I would avoid snatching a honey-comb from among a hive of live bees." When, three years later, all the world laughed over James Smith's really admirable *Death of Clutterbuck*, in the "Rejected Addresses," no one laughed more heartily than the author of Marmion.

To this period belong two stories, which it would be unfair to suppress. It is a rare case when a large family does not include a frail member. Walter Scott's youngest brother Daniel was such.[1] After many luckless adventures, he obtained, through the poet's connection with George Ellis, a post of responsibility on a West Indian estate; but in a moment of danger, his nerves shewed the effects of continued dissipation. He was dismissed, and died soon afterwards at Edinburgh, under his mother's roof—but his brother would never see him, nor would he attend his funeral, or wear mourning for him. Thus sternly, when

[1] See Chap. I., ante, p. 12.

in the height and pride of his blood, could Scott, whose heart was never hardened against the distress of an enemy, recoil from the disgrace of a brother. It is a more pleasing part of my duty to add, that he spoke to me, twenty years afterwards, in terms of great and painful contrition for the austerity with which he had conducted himself on this occasion. I must add, moreover, that he took a warm interest in a natural child whom Daniel had bequeathed to his mother's care; and after the old lady's death, religiously supplied her place as the boy's protector.

The other story is connected with his ever dear brother Thomas, in whose hands, as has been mentioned above, the business that he inherited did not prosper. Walter, as Clerk of Session, had the patronage of several offices in the Register House at Edinburgh, and he appointed Thomas to one of these, by no means so lucrative as others at his disposal, but welcome under the circumstances. Thomas soon after found it convenient to withdraw for a time to the Isle of Man; and while he was there, the Government introduced a bill, by which his *extractorship*, and many other little places of the sort, were to be abolished, the holders receiving some compensation by way of annuity. Some keen Edinburgh partizans suggested to the Earl of Lauderdale (then at the head of the Whig interest in Scotland) that Walter Scott had foreseen the abolition of the post when he bestowed it on Thomas—that Thomas was discharging its small duties by deputy—and that in his case *compensation* would be only the successful crowning of a job. Scott, in his letters to friends, both Whig and Tory, denies indignantly that either he or Thomas had anticipated the abolition of the office, and intimates his conviction that the parliamentary opposition to the compensation sprang entirely from the wish to hurt his own feelings. Lord Lauderdale's amendment was lost in the House of Peers. Indeed no other Peer spoke in favour of it except Lord Holland; and Scott resented that speech

warmly, because his Lordship seemed to have "gone out of his way" in meddling about a small Scotch matter. It happened unluckily that Lord Holland visited Edinburgh within a few weeks afterwards, and he was then introduced by Scott's friend, Mr Thomas Thomson, at a dinner of *the Friday Club*.[1] The poet, in a letter to his brother, says: "We met accidentally at a public party. He made up to me, but I remembered his part in your affair, and *cut* him with as little remorse as an old pen." Two gentlemen who were present, inform me that they distinctly remember a very painful scene, for which, knowing Scott's habitual good-nature and urbanity, they had been wholly unprepared. One of them (Lord Jeffrey) adds, that this was the only example of rudeness he ever witnessed in him in the course of a lifelong familiarity. It is consolatory to add, that he enjoyed much agreeable intercourse in after days with Lord Holland.

I willingly turn from these dregs of politics to some other matters, which about this time occupied a large share of his thoughts. He had from his boyish days a great love for theatrical representation; and so soon as circumstances enabled him to practise extended hospitality, the chief actors of his time, whenever they happened to be in Scotland, were among the most acceptable of his guests. Mr Charles Young was, I believe, the first of them of whom he saw much: as early as 1803 I find him writing of that gentleman to the Marchioness of Abercorn as a valuable addition to the society of Edinburgh; and down to the end of Scott's life, Mr Young was never in the north without visiting him. Another graceful performer, of whom he saw a great deal in his private circle, was Miss Smith, afterwards Mrs Bartley. But at the period of which

[1] *The Friday Club* was instituted in June 1803—on the model, I believe, of Johnson's at the Turk's Head. Scott, Thomson, and most of their intimates at the Bar were original members. The great majority were Whigs. They dined at Fortune's tavern.

I am now treating, his principal theatrical intimacy was with John Philip Kemble, and his sister Mrs Siddons, both of whom he appears to have often met at Lord Abercorn's villa near Stanmore. Of John Kemble's character and manners, he has recorded his impressions in a pleasing reviewal of Mr Boaden's Memoir. The great tragedian's love of black-letter learning afforded a strong bond of fellowship; and I have heard Scott say that the only man who ever seduced him into very deep potations in his middle life was Kemble. He was frequently at Ashestiel, and a grave butler, by name *John Macbeth*, made sore complaints of the bad hours kept on such occasions in one of the most regular of households; but the watchings of the night were not more grievous to "Cousin Macbeth," as Kemble called the honest *beauffetier*, than were the hazards and fatigues of the morning to the representative of "the Scotch usurper." Kemble's miseries during a rough gallop were quite as grotesque as those of his namesake, and it must be owned that species of distress was one from the contemplation of which his host could never derive anything but amusement.

I have heard Scott chuckle with particular glee over the recollection of an excursion to the vale of the Ettrick, near which river the party were pursued by a bull. "Come, King John," said he, "we must even take the water;" and accordingly he and his daughter Sophia plunged into the stream. But King John, halting on the bank, and surveying the river, which happened to be full and turbid, exclaimed, in his usual solemn manner,

—— "The flood is angry, Sheriff;
Methinks I'll get me up into a tree."[1]

It was well that the dogs had succeeded in diverting the bull, because there was no tree at hand which could have

[1] John Kemble's most familiar table-talk often flowed into blank verse; and so indeed did his sister's. Scott (who was a capital

sustained King John, nor, had that been otherwise, could so stately a personage have dismounted and ascended with such alacrity as circumstances would have required. He at length followed his friends through the river with the rueful dignity of Don Quixote.

It was this intercourse which led Scott to exert himself strenuously about 1809, to prevail on Mr Henry Siddons, the nephew of Kemble, to undertake the lease and management of the Edinburgh Theatre. On this occasion he purchased a share, and became one of the acting trustees; and thenceforth, during a long series of years, he continued to take a very lively concern in the proceedings of the Edinburgh company. In this he was plentifully encouraged by his domestic *camarilla;* for his wife had all a Frenchwoman's passion for the *spectacle;* and the elder Ballantyne was a regular newspaper critic of theatrical affairs, and in that capacity had already attained a measure of authority supremely gratifying to himself.

The first new play produced by Henry Siddons was the Family Legend of Joanna Baillie. This was, I believe, the first of her dramas that ever underwent the test of representation in her native kingdom; and Scott exerted himself most indefatigably in its behalf. He was consulted about all the *minutiæ* of costume, attended every rehearsal, and supplied the prologue. The play was better received than any other which the gifted authoress has since subjected to the same experiment; and how ardently Scott enjoyed its success may be seen in many letters which he addressed to his friend on the occasion.

It was at a rehearsal of this piece that Scott was first

mimic) often repeated her tragic exclamation to a footboy during a dinner at Ashestiel—

"You've brought me water, boy—I ask'd for beer."

Another time, dining with a Provost of Edinburgh, she ejaculated, in answer to her host's apology for his *piece de resistance*—

"Beef cannot be too salt for me, my Lord!"

introduced to another theatrical performer—who ere long acquired a large share of his regard and confidence—Mr Daniel Terry. He had received a good education, and been regularly trained as an architect; but abandoned that profession at an early period of life, and was now beginning to attract attention as a valuable actor in Henry Siddons's company. Already he and the Ballantynes were constant companions, and through his familiarity with them, Scott had abundant opportunities of appreciating his many excellent and agreeable qualities. He had the manners and feelings of a gentleman. Like John Kemble, he was deeply skilled in the old literature of the drama, and he rivalled Scott's own enthusiasm for the antiquities of *vertu*. Their epistolary correspondence in after days was frequent, and none so well illustrates many of the poet's minor tastes and habits. As their letters lie before me, they appear as if they had all been penned by the same hand. Terry's idolatry of his new friend induced him to imitate his writing so zealously, that Scott used to say, if he were called on to swear to any document, the utmost he could venture to attest would be, that it was either in his own hand or in Terry's. The actor, perhaps unconsciously, mimicked him in other matters with hardly inferior pertinacity. His small lively features had acquired, before I knew him, a truly ludicrous cast of Scott's graver expression; he had taught his tiny eyebrow the very trick of the poet's meditative frown; and to crown all, he so habitually affected his tone and accent, that, though a native of Bath, a stranger could hardly have doubted he must be a Scotchman. These things afforded all their acquaintance much diversion; but perhaps no Stoic could have helped being secretly gratified by seeing a clever and sensible man convert himself into a living type and symbol of admiration.

Charles Mathews and Terry were once thrown out of a gig together, and the former received an injury which made him halt ever afterwards, while the latter escaped unhurt.

"Dooms, *Dauniel*," said Mathews when they next met, "what a pity that it wasna your luck to get the game leg, mon! Your *Shirra* would hae been the very thing, ye ken, an' ye wad hae been croose till ye war coffined!" Terry, though he did not always relish bantering on this subject, replied readily and good-humouredly by a quotation from Peter Pindar's *Bozzy and Piozzi*:—

> "When Foote his leg by some misfortune broke,
> Says I to Johnson, all by way of joke,
> Sam, sir, in Paragraph will soon be clever,
> He'll take off Peter better now than ever."

Mathews's mirthful caricature of Terry's sober mimicry of Scott was one of the richest extravaganzas of his social hours; but indeed I have often seen this Proteus dramatize the whole Ballantyne group with equal success—while Rigdumfunnidos screamed with delight, and Aldiborontiphoscophornio faintly chuckled, and the Sheriff, gently smiling, pushed round his decanters.[1]

Scott had by the end of 1809 all but completed his third great poem; yet this year also was crowded with miscellaneous literary labours. In it he made great progress with Swift, and in it he finished and saw published his edition of the Sadler Papers; the notes copious, curious, lively and entertaining, and the Life of Sir Ralph a very pleasing specimen of his style. Several volumes of the huge Somers' Collection, illustrated throughout with similar care, were also issued in 1809; and I suppose he received his fee for each volume as it appeared—the whole sum amounting, when the last came out in 1812, to 1300 guineas. His labours on these collections were gradually

[1] Perhaps the very richest article in Mathews's social budget, was the scene alleged to have occurred when he himself communicated to the two Ballantynes the new titles which the Sheriff had conferred on them. Rigdum's satisfaction with his own cap and bells, and the other's indignant incredulity, passing by degrees into tragical horror, made, I am told, a delicious contrast.

storing his mind with that minute knowledge of the leading persons and events both of Scotch and English history, which made his conversation on such subjects that of one who had rather lived with than read about the departed. He delighted in them, and never complained that they interrupted disadvantageously the works of his higher genius. But he submitted to many less agreeable tasks—among others, at this same period, to a good deal of trouble entailed on him by the will of Miss Seward. Dying in March 1809, she bequeathed her poetry to Scott, with an injunction to publish it speedily, and prefix a sketch of her life; while she made her letters (of which she had kept copies) the property of Constable. Scott superintended, accordingly, the edition of the lady's verses which was published in three volumes by John Ballantyne; and Constable lost no time in announcing her correspondence—an announcement which the poet observed with trepidation; for few had suffered more than himself from her epistolary restlessness. He says to an authoress of a different breed (Miss Baillie)—"The despair which I used to feel on receiving poor Miss Seward's letters, whom I really liked, gave me a most unsentimental horror for sentimental letters. I am now doing penance for my ill-breeding, by submitting to edit her posthumous poetry, most of which is absolutely execrable. This, however, is the least of my evils, for when she proposed this bequest to me, which I could not in decency refuse, she combined it with a request that I would publish her whole literary correspondence. This I declined on principle, having a particular aversion at perpetuating that sort of gossip; but what availed it? Lo! to ensure the publication, she left it to an Edinburgh bookseller; and I anticipate the horror of seeing myself advertised for a live poet like a wild beast on a painted streamer; for I understand all her friends are depicted therein in body, mind, and manners." Mr Constable, however, took this opportunity of re-opening his intercourse with Scott,

and gave him essential relief by allowing him to draw his pen through Miss Seward's extravagant eulogies on himself and his poetry. This attention so gratified him, that he authorized John Ballantyne to ask, in his name, that experienced bookseller's advice respecting the poem now nearly completed, the amount of the first impression, and other professional details. Mr Constable readily gave the assistance thus requested, and would willingly have taken any share they pleased in the adventure. They had completed their copyright arrangements before these communications occurred, and the triumphant success of the *coup d'essai* of the new firm was sufficient to close Scott's ears for a season against any propositions of the like kind from the house at the Cross; but from this time there was no return of anything like personal ill-will between the parties.

Early in May the Lady of the Lake came out—as her two elder sisters had done—in all the majesty of quarto, with every accompanying grace of typography, and with moreover an engraved frontispiece of Saxon's portrait of Scott; the price of the book two guineas. For the copyright the poet had nominally received 2000 guineas, but as John Ballantyne and Co. retained three-fourths of the property to themselves (Miller of London purchasing the other fourth), the author's profits were, or should have been, more than this.

Mr Cadell, the publisher of this Memoir, then a young man in training for his profession, retains a strong impression of the interest which the quarto excited before it was on the counter. "James Ballantyne," he says, "read the cantos from time to time to select coteries, as they advanced at press. Common fame was loud in their favour; a great poem was on all hands anticipated. I do not recollect that any of all the author's works was ever looked for with more intense anxiety, or that any one of them excited a more extraordinary sensation when it did appear. The whole country rang with the praises of the poet—crowds

set off to view the scenery of Loch Katrine, till then comparatively unknown; and as the book came out just before the season for excursions, every house and inn in that neighbourhood was crammed with a constant succession of visitors. It is a well-ascertained fact, that from the date of the publication of the Lady of the Lake, the post-horse duty in Scotland rose in an extraordinary degree, and indeed it continued to do so regularly for a number of years, the author's succeeding works keeping up the enthusiasm for our scenery which he had thus originally created."—Mr Cadell adds, that four 8vo editions followed the quarto within the space of twelve months; that these carried the early sale to 20,000 copies; and that by July 1836, the legitimate sale in Great Britain had been not less than 50,000 copies; since which date I understand that, in spite of legal and illegal piracies, the fair demand has been well kept up.

In their reception of this work, the critics were for once in full harmony with each other, and with the popular voice. The article in the Quarterly was written by George Ellis; but its eulogies, though less discriminative, are not a whit more emphatic than those of Mr Jeffrey in the rival Review. Indeed, I have always considered this last paper as the best specimen of contemporary criticism on Scott's poetry. The Lay, if I may venture to state the creed now established, is, I should say, generally considered as the most natural and original, Marmion as the most powerful and splendid, the Lady of the Lake as the most interesting, romantic, picturesque, and graceful of his great poems.

Of its success he speaks as follows in 1830:—"It was certainly so extraordinary as to induce me for the moment to conclude that I had at last fixed a nail in the proverbially inconstant wheel of Fortune. But, as the celebrated John Wilkes is said to have explained to King George the Third, that he himself was never a Wilkite, so I can with honest truth exculpate myself from having been at any

time a partisan of my own poetry, even when it was in the highest fashion with the million."

James Ballantyne has preserved in his *Memorandum* an anecdote strikingly confirmative of the most remarkable statement in this page of Scott's confessions. "I remember," he says, "going into his library shortly after the publication of the Lady of the Lake, and finding Miss Scott (who was then a very young girl) there by herself, I asked her—'Well, Miss Sophia, how do you like the Lady of the Lake?' Her answer was given with perfect simplicity—'Oh, I have not read it: papa says there's nothing so bad for young people as reading bad poetry.'"

In fact, his children in those days had no idea of the source of his distinction—or rather, indeed, that his position was in any respect different from that of other Advocates, Sheriffs, and Clerks of Session. The eldest boy came home one afternoon about this time from the High School, with tears and blood hardened together upon his cheeks.—"Well, Wat," said his father, "what have you been fighting about to-day?" With that the boy blushed and hung his head, and at last stammered out—that he had been called *a lassie.* "Indeed!" said Mrs Scott, "this was a terrible mischief to be sure." "You may say what you please, mamma," Wat answered roughly, "but I dinna think there's a *waufer* (shabbier) thing in the world than to be a lassie, to sit boring at a clout." Upon further inquiry it turned out that one or two of his companions had dubbed him *The Lady of the Lake*, and the phrase was to him incomprehensible, save as conveying some imputation on his prowess, which he accordingly vindicated in the usual style of the Yards. Of the poem he had never before heard. Shortly after, this story having got wind, one of Scott's colleagues of the Clerks' Table said to the boy—(who was in the home circle called *Gilnockie*, from his admiration of Johnny Armstrong)—'Gilnockie, my man, you cannot surely help seeing that great people

make more work about your papa than they do about me or any other of your *uncles*—what is it do you suppose that occasions this?" The little fellow pondered for a minute or two, and then answered very gravely—"It's commonly *him* that sees the hare sitting." And yet this was the man that had his children all along so very much with him. In truth, however, young Walter had guessed pretty shrewdly in the matter, for his father had all the tact of the Sutherland Highlander, whose detection of an Irish rebel up to the neck in a bog, he has commemorated in a note upon Rokeby. Like him, he was quick to catch the *sparkle* of the victim's eye; and often said jestingly of himself, that whatever might be thought of him as a *maker* (poet), he was an excellent *trouveur*.

Ballantyne adds:—"One day about this same time, when his fame was supposed to have reached its acmé, I said to him—'Will you excuse me, Mr Scott, but I should like to ask you what you think of your own genius as a poet, in comparison with that of Burns?' He replied—'There is no comparison whatever—we ought not to be named in the same day.' 'Indeed!' I answered, 'would you compare Campbell to Burns?' 'No, James, not at all—If you wish to speak of a real poet, Joanna Baillie is now the highest genius of our country.'—But, in fact," (continues Ballantyne)—"he had often said to me that neither his own nor any modern popular style of composition was that from which he derived most pleasure. I asked him what it was. He answered—Johnson's; and that he had more pleasure in reading *London*, and *The Vanity of Human Wishes*, than any other poetical composition he could mention; and I think I never saw his countenance more indicative of high admiration than while reciting aloud from those productions."

In his sketch of Johnson's Life, Scott says—"The deep and pathetic morality of *The Vanity of Human Wishes*, has often extracted tears from those whose eyes wander

dry over pages professedly sentimental." The last line of MS. that he sent to the press was a quotation from the same piece. Yet it is the cant of our day—above all, of its poetasters, that Johnson was no poet. To be sure, they say the same of Pope—and hint it occasionally even of Dryden.

Walter Scott was at this epoch in the highest spirits, and having strong reasons of various kinds for his resolution to avail himself of the gale of favour, only hesitated in which quarter to explore the materials of some new romance. His first and most earnest desire was "to take a peep at Lord Wellington and his merrymen in the Peninsula,—where," he says, "I daresay I should have picked up some good materials for battle scenery;" and he afterwards writes with envy of the way in which a young barrister of his acquaintance (the late excellent John Miller of Lincoln's Inn, K.C.,) spent the long vacation of that year—having the good luck to arrive at Oporto when our army was in retreat for the frontier, and after travelling through a country totally deserted, to hear suddenly, in a low glen, the distant sound of a bagpipe —be welcomed by the officers of a Highland Regiment—and next day witness (rifle in hand) the Battle of Busaco. But Scott dropt his Peninsular plan on perceiving that it gave his wife "more distress than could be compensated by any gratification of his own curiosity." He then thought of revisiting Rokeby—for, as was mentioned already, he had from the first day that he spent there designed to connect its localities with his verse. But the burst of enthusiasm which followed the appearance of the Lady of the Lake finally swayed him to undertake a journey, deeper than he had as yet gone, into the *Highlands*, and a warm invitation from the Laird of Staffa, easily induced him to add a voyage to the *Hebrides*. He was accompanied by his wife, his daughter Sophia, Miss Hannah Mackenzie, daughter of "The Man of Feeling," and a

dear friend and distant relation, Mrs Apreece (now Lady Davy), who had been, as he says in one of his letters, "a lioness of the first magnitude in Edinburgh," during the preceding winter. He travelled slowly with his own horses, through Argyleshire, as far as Oban; but even where post-horses might have been had, this was the mode he always preferred in these family excursions, for he delighted in the liberty it afforded him of alighting and lingering as often and as long as he chose; and, in truth, he often performed the far greater part of the day's journey on foot—examining the map in the morning so as to make himself master of the bearings—and following his own fancy over some old disused riding track, or along the margin of a stream, while the carriage, with its female occupants, adhered to the proper road. Of the insular part of the expedition we have many details in the appendages to the Lord of the Isles—and others not less interesting in the Notes which he contributed to Croker's Edition of Boswell. The private letters of 1810 dwell with delight on a scene which it was, indeed, special good fortune for him to witness:—the arrival among the Mackinnons of their young chief (since well known as M.P. for Lymington), whose ancestors had sold or forfeited their insular territory, but could not alienate the affectionate veneration of their clan. He also expatiates with hearty satisfaction on the patriarchal style of the hospitality of Mulva, where the Laird of Staffa (a brother of his colleague Mr Macdonald Buchanan) lived among "a people distractedly fond of him," cheered by their adherence to the native soil from which so many of the neighbouring tribes were yearly emigrating, proudly and hopefully encouraging their growth in numbers, and doing whatever he could to keep up the old manners and the old spirit of his region—"his people doubled and his income trebled." But this is a picture to which we cannot now revert without pain and regret; for changes in public polity within a few years destroyed ut-

terly the ease and prosperity which the poet witnessed. Like so many others of his class, that gay and high-spirited gentleman was destined to see his fond people pine around him in destitution, until the majority of them also took refuge beyond the Atlantic,—and there was left to himself only the name and shadow of that fair possession, of which, on his death, the last fragment—the rocky Staffa itself,—had to be parted with by his children.

On returning from this pleasant expedition, and establishing himself at Ashestiel, Scott, in searching an old desk for fishing-flies one morning, found the forgotten MS. of the first two or three chapters of *Waverley*. From a letter of James Ballantyne's on now reading these chapters, it is plain that he was not their unfavourable critic of 1805; but though he augured "success" if the novel were completed, he added that he could not say "how much," and honestly confessed that the impression made on his mind was far from resembling that he had received from the first specimen of the *Lady of the Lake:* and once more the fated MS. was restored to its hiding-place. But this was not the only unwelcome communication from that quarter. Already their publishing adventure began to wear a bad aspect. Between 1805 and the Christmas of 1809, Scott invested in the Ballantyne firms not less than £9000; by this time probably there had been a farther demand on his purse; and now the printer's triumph in the fast multiplying editions of the Lady of the Lake was darkened with ominous reports about their miscellaneous speculations—such as the Beaumont and Fletcher of Weber—the "Tixall Poetry,"—and the History of the Culdees by Dr Jamieson. But a still more serious business was the Edinburgh Annual Register. Its two first volumes were issued about this time, and expectation had been highly excited by the announcement that the historical department was in the hands of Southey, while Scott and other eminent persons were to contribute to its miscella-

neous literature and science. Mr Southey was fortunate in beginning his narrative with the great era of the Spanish Revolt against Napoleon, and it exhibited his usual research, reflection, elegance, and spirit. The second volume contained some of his most admired minor poems; and Scott enriched it both with verse and prose. Nevertheless, the public were alarmed by the extent of the history, and the prospect of two volumes annually. This was, in short, a new periodical publication on a large scale; all such adventures are hazardous; none of them can succeed, unless there be a skilful bookseller, and a zealous editor, who give a large share of their industry and intelligence, day after day, to its arrangements. Such a bookseller John Ballantyne was not; such an editor, with Scott's multifarious engagements, he could not be. The volumes succeeded each other at irregular intervals; there was soon felt the want of one ever active presiding spirit; and though the work was continued during a long series of years, it never profited the projectors.

The first *livraison* included an essay of some length by Scott on the proposed changes in the Scotch law and judicature, which had occupied Sir Ilay Campbell's Commission: and the sagacity of this piece appears as creditable to him as the clear felicity of its language. I fancy few English lawyers will now deny that their criminal system at least had more need to borrow from Scotland, than hers from theirs. However, his essay strongly deprecated the commencement of a general innovation; and though the condition of the Ballantyne affairs was already uneasy, and his correspondence shews that he fretted occasionally under the unrecompensed drudgery of his clerkship, still I cannot but suspect that his repugnance to these legal novelties had a share in producing the state of mind indicated by a letter of November 1810 to his brother Thomas. He there says: "I have no objection to tell you in confidence, that, were Dundas to go out Governor-General to

India, and were he willing to take me with him in a good situation, I would not hesitate to pitch the Court of Session and the booksellers to the Devil, and try my fortune in another climate." He adds, "but this is strictly *entre nous*" —nor indeed was I aware, until I found this letter, that he had ever entertained such a design as that which it communicates. Mr Dundas (now Lord Melville) being highly acceptable to the Court of Directors in the office of President of the Board of Control, which he long filled, was spoken of at various times as likely to be appointed Governor-General. He had no doubt hinted to Scott, that in case he should ever assume that station, it would be agreeable for him to be accompanied by his early friend: and there could be little question of Scott's capacity to have filled with distinction the part either of an Indian secretary or of an Indian judge. But enough of what was but a passing dream. The buoyancy of his temperament had sustained no lasting depression—and his circumstances before the lapse of another year underwent a change which for ever fixed his destiny to the soil of his best affections and happiest inspirations.

Meantime, unflagging was the interest with which, among whatever labours and anxieties, he watched the progress of the great contest in the Peninsula. It was so earnest, that he never on any journey, not even in his very frequent passages between Edinburgh and Ashestiel, omitted to take with him the largest and best map he had been able to procure of the seat of war; upon this he was perpetually poring, tracing the marches and countermarches of the French and English by means of black and white pins; and not seldom did Mrs Scott complain of this constant occupation of his attention and her carriage. In the beginning of 1811, a committee was formed in London to collect subscriptions for the relief of the Portuguese, who had seen their lands wasted and their houses burnt in the course of Massena's last campaign; and Scott,

on reading the advertisement, addressed the chairman, begging to contribute the profits, to whatever they might amount, of the first edition of a poem connected with the localities of the patriotic struggle. His offer was accepted. The *Vision of Don Roderick* was published, in 4to, in July; and the money forwarded to the board. Lord Dalkeith writes thus:—"Those with ample fortunes and thicker heads may easily give 100 guineas to a subscription, but the man is really to be envied who can draw that sum from his own brains, and apply the produce to so exalted a purpose."

The *Vision* had features of novelty, both as to the subject and the manner of the composition, which gave rise to some sharp controversy. The main fable was indeed from the most picturesque region of old romance; but it was made throughout the vehicle of feelings directly adverse to those with which the Whig critics had all along regarded the interference of Britain in behalf of the nations of the Peninsula; and the silence which, while celebrating our other generals on that scene of action, had been preserved with respect to Scott's own gallant countryman, Sir John Moore, was considered or represented by them as an odious example of genius hoodwinked by the influence of party. Nor were there wanting persons who affected to discover that the charm of Scott's poetry had to a great extent evaporated under the severe test to which he had exposed it, by adopting, in place of those comparatively light and easy measures in which he had hitherto dealt, the most elaborate one that our literature exhibits. The piece, notwithstanding the complexity of the Spenserian stanza, had been very rapidly executed; and it shows, accordingly, many traces of negligence. But the patriotic inspiration of it found an echo in the vast majority of British hearts; many of the Whig oracles themselves acknowledged that the difficulties of the metre had been on the whole

successfully overcome; and even the hardest critics were compelled to express unqualified admiration of various detached pictures and passages, which, in truth, as no one now disputes, neither he nor any other poet ever excelled. The whole setting or framework—whatever relates to the Last of the Goths himself—was, I think, even then unanimously pronounced admirable; and no party feeling could blind any man to the heroic splendour of such stanzas as those in which the three equally gallant elements of a British army are contrasted. I incline to believe that the choice of the measure had been in no small degree the result of hints from more than one friendly critic on the subject of his favourite octosyllabics.

Of the letters addressed to him soon after the *Vision* appeared, he has preserved several which had no doubt interested and gratified him at the time. But I am very sure no one was so welcome as that which reached him, some months after his poem had ceased to be new in England, from a dear friend who, after various chances and changes, was then serving as a captain in the 58th regiment. "Last spring," says he (Lisbon, Aug. 31), "I was so fortunate as to get a reading of the Lady of the Lake, when in the lines of Torres Vedras, and thought I had no inconsiderable right to enter into and judge of its beauties, having made one of the party on your first visit to the Trossachs. While the book was in my possession, I had nightly invitations to *evening parties!* and I must say that (though not conscious of much merit in the way of recitation) my attempts to do justice to the grand opening of the stag-hunt were always followed with bursts of applause—for this Canto was the favourite among the rough sons of the fighting Third Division. At that time supplies of various kinds were scanty;—and, in gratitude, I am bound to declare that to the good offices of the Lady I owed many a nice slice of ham and rummer of hot punch." The gallant and gastronomical Captain (now Sir Adam) Fer-

gusson (who did not by the bye escape suspicions of having been a little glanced at in *Dalgetty*) was no less heartily regaled on the arrival of The Vision "*ex dono auctoris*." He again writes (6th October), "I relished much the wild and fanciful opening of the introductory part; yet what particularly delighted me were the stanzas announcing the approach of the British fleets and armies; and I can assure you the Pats are, to a man, enchanted with the picture drawn of their countrymen, and the mention of the great man himself. Your swearing, in the true character of a minstrel, 'shiver my harp, and burn its every chord,' amused me not a little.—Should it be my fate to survive, I am resolved to try my hand on a snug little farm either up or down the Tweed, somewhere in your neighbourhood; and on this dream many a delightful castle do I build." At least one of the knight's *chateaux en Espagne* was, as we shall see, realized in the sequel. I must not omit a circumstance which Scott learned from another source, and which he always took special pride in relating. In the course of the day when the Lady of the Lake first reached Fergusson, he was posted with his company on a point of ground exposed to the enemy's artillery. The men were ordered to lie prostrate on the ground; while they kept that attitude, the Captain, kneeling at their head, read aloud the battle of Canto VI., and the listening soldiers only interrupted him by a joyous huzza whenever the shot struck the bank close above them.

I have alluded to some hints of Ellis, Canning, and others, in disparagement of octosyllabics. Having essayed, probably to please these friends, the most difficult of all English measures in Don Roderick, Scott this year tried also the heroic couplet, and produced *The Poacher*—on seeing which, Crabbe, as his biographer tells us, exclaimed, "This man, whoever he is, can do all that I can, and *something more*." This piece, an imitation of Moore, and another of *Scott*, were published in the Register, with a preface,

entitled The Inferno of Altesidora, in which he shadows out the chief reviewers of the day, especially Jeffrey and Gifford, with admirable breadth and yet lightness of pleasantry; but he kept his secret as to this Inferno and all its appendages, even from Miss Baillie—to whom he says, on their appearance, that—"the imitation of Crabbe had struck him as good; that of Moore as bad; and that of himself as beginning well, but falling off grievously to the close." It is curious to trace the beginnings of the systematic mystification which he afterwards put in practice. The quarto edition of Don Roderick having rapidly gone off, instead of reprinting the poem as usual in a separate octavo, he inserted it entire in the Register; a proof how much that undertaking was felt to require extraordinary efforts.

Throughout 1811, his serious labour continued to be bestowed on the Swift; but this and all other literary tasks were frequently interrupted in consequence of a step which he took early in the year. He had now at last the near prospect of emolument from his Edinburgh post. For, connected with the other reforms in the Scotch judicature, was a plan for allowing the retirement of functionaries, who had served to an advanced period of life, upon pensions—while the effective Clerks of Session were to be paid not by fees, but by fixed salaries of £1300; and contemplating a speedy accession of income so considerable as this, he resolved to place himself in the situation to which he had probably from his earliest days looked forward as the highest object of ambition, that of a Tweedside Laird.—*Sit mihi sedes utinam senectæ!*

And the place on which he had fixed his views, though not to the common eye very attractive, had long been one of peculiar interest for him. I have often heard him tell, that when travelling in boyhood with his father from Selkirk to Melrose, the old man desired the carriage to halt at the foot of an eminence, and said, "We must

get out here, Walter, and see a thing quite in your line." His father then conducted him to a rude stone on the edge of an acclivity about half a mile above the Tweed, which marks the spot—

> Where gallant Cessford's life-blood dear
> Reeked on dark Elliot's border spear.

This was the conclusion of the battle of Melrose, fought in 1526, between the Earls of Angus and Home and the two chiefs of the race of Kerr on the one side, and Buccleuch on the other, in sight of the young King James V., the possession of whose person was the object of the contest. This battle is often mentioned in the Border Minstrelsy, and the reader will find a long note on it, under the lines which I have just quoted from the Lay of the Last Minstrel. In the names of *Skirmish-field*, *Charge-Law*, and so forth, various incidents of the fight have found a lasting record; the spot where the retainer of Buccleuch terminated the pursuit by the mortal wound of Kerr of Cessford (ancestor of the Dukes of Roxburghe), has always been called *Turn-again*. In his own future domain the young minstrel had before him the scene of the last great Clan-battle of the Borders.

On the 12th of May 1811, he writes thus to James Ballantyne,—"My lease of Ashestiel is out. I have, therefore, resolved to purchase a piece of ground sufficient for a cottage and a few fields. There are two pieces, either of which would suit me, but both would make a very desirable property indeed. They stretch along the Tweed, on the opposite side from Lord Somerville, and could be had for between £7000 and £8000—or either separate for about half the sum. I have serious thoughts of one or both, and must have recourse to my pen to make the matter easy. The worst is the difficulty which John might find in advancing so large a sum as the copyright of a new poem; supposing it to be made payable within a year at farthest

from the work going to press,—which would be essential to my purpose. Yet the Lady of the Lake came soon home. I have a letter this morning giving me good hope of my Treasury business being carried through: if this takes place, I will buy both the little farms, which will give me a mile of the beautiful turn of Tweed above Gala-foot —if not, I will confine myself to one. It is proper John and you should be as soon as possible apprized of these my intentions, which I believe you will think reasonable in my situation, and at my age, while I may yet hope to sit under the shade of a tree of my own planting. I hope this Register will give a start to its predecessors; I assure you I shall spare no pains. John must lend his earnest attention to clear his hands of the quire stock, and to taking in as little as he can unless in the way of exchange; in short, reefing our sails, which are at present too much spread for our ballast."

It would no doubt have been wise not to buy land at all until he had seen the Treasury arrangement as to his clerkship completed—until he had completed also the poem on which he relied mainly for the purchase-money; above all, until "John reefed his sails;" but he contented himself with one of the farms, that comprising the scene of Cessford's slaughter; the cost being L.4000—one-half of which was borrowed of his brother, Major John Scott, the other, raised by the Ballantynes, on the security of the long-meditated *Rokeby*. The seller, the Rev. Dr Douglas, holding the living of Galashiels, in the same neighbourhood, had never resided on the property, and his efforts to embellish it had been limited to one stripe of firs, so long and so narrow that Scott likened it to a black hair-comb. It ran from the precincts of the homestead to near *Turn-again*, and has bequeathed the name of *the Doctor's redding-kame* to the mass of nobler trees amidst which its dark straight line can now hardly be traced. The farm consisted of a meadow or *haugh* along the banks of the

river, and a tract of undulated ground behind, all in a neglected state, undrained, wretchedly enclosed, much of it covered with the native heath. The house was small and poor, with a common *kail-yard* on one flank, and a staring barn on the other; while in front appeared a filthy pond covered with ducks and duckweed, from which the whole tenement had derived the unharmonious designation of *Clarty Hole*. But the Tweed was every thing to him—a beautiful river, flowing broad and bright over a bed of milkwhite pebbles, unless here and there where it darkened into a deep pool, overhung as yet only by the birches and alders which had survived the statelier growth of the primitive Forest; and the first hour that he took possession he claimed for his farm the name of the adjoining *ford*, situated just above the influx of the classical tributary Gala. As might be guessed from the name of *Abbotsford*, these lands had all belonged of old to the great Abbey of Melrose; and indeed the Duke of Buccleuch, as the territorial representative of that religious brotherhood, still retains some seignorial rights over them and almost all the surrounding district. Another feature of no small interest in Scott's eyes was an ancient Roman road leading from the Eildon hills to this ford, the remains of which, however, are now mostly sheltered from view amidst his numerous plantations. The most graceful and picturesque of all the monastic ruins in Scotland, the Abbey of Melrose itself, is visible from many points in the immediate neighbourhood of the house; and last, not least, on the rising ground full in view across the river, the traveller may still observe the chief traces of that celebrated British barrier, the *Catrail*. Such was the territory on which his prophetic eye already beheld rich pastures, embosomed among flourishing groves, where his children's children should thank the founder. To his brother-in-law Mr Carpenter he writes, "I have bought a property extending along the banks of the river Tweed for about half-a-mile.

This is the greatest incident which has lately taken place in our domestic concerns, and I assure you we are not a little proud of being greeted as *laird* and *lady* of *Abbotsford.* We will give a grand gala when we take possession of it, and as we are very *clannish* in this corner, all the Scotts in the country, from the Duke to the peasant, shall dance on the green to the bagpipes, and drink whisky punch."

About the same time he tells Miss Baillie :—" My dreams about my cottage go on. My present intention is to have only two spare bed-rooms, with dressing-rooms, each of which will on a pinch have a couch bed ; but I cannot relinquish my Border principle of accommodating all the cousins and *duniwastles*, who will rather sleep on chairs, and on the floor, and in the hay-loft, than be absent when folks are gathered together; and truly I used to think Ashestiel was very much like the tent of Periebanou, in the Arabian Nights, that suited alike all numbers of company equally; ten people fill it at any time, and I remember its lodging thirty-two without any complaint. As for the *go-about* folks, they generally pay their score one way or other; and to confess the truth, I do a little envy my old friend Abonhassan his walks on the bridge of Bagdad, and evening conversations and suppers with the guests whom he was never to see again in his life ; he never fell into a scrape till he met with the Caliph—and, thank God, no Caliphs frequent the brigg of Melrose, which will be my nearest Rialto at Abbotsford."

In answering this letter, Miss Baillie says, very prettily : —" Yourself and Mrs Scott, and the children, will feel sorry at leaving Ashestiel, which will long have a consequence, and be the object of kind feelings with many, from having once been the place of your residence. If I should ever be happy enough to be at Abbotsford, you must take me to see Ashestiel too. I have a kind of tenderness for it, as one has for a man's first wife, when you hear he has married a second." The same natural sentiment is expressed in a manner characteristically different, in a letter from the Ettrick Shepherd :—

"Are you not sorry at leaving *auld Ashestiel* for *gude an' a*, after being at so much trouble and expense in making it a complete thing? Upon my word I was, on seeing it in the papers."

In January 1812, Scott entered upon the enjoyment of his proper salary as a clerk of Session, which, with his sheriffdom, gave him from this time till very near the close of his life, a professional income of L.1600 a-year.

The next of his letters to Joanna Baillie is curious, as giving his first impressions on reading Childe Harold. "It is, I think, a very clever poem, but gives no good symptom of the writer's heart or morals. Although there is a caution against it in the preface, you cannot for your soul avoid concluding that the author, as he gives an account of his own travels, is also doing so in his own character. Now really this is too bad: vice ought to be a little more modest, and it must require impudence at least equal to the noble Lord's other powers, to claim sympathy gravely for the ennui arising from his being tired of his wassailers and his paramours. Yet with all this conceit and assurance, there is much poetical merit in the book, and I wish you would read it." A month later, he writes in a similar strain to Morritt (May 12), but concludes thus:—"This is upon the whole a piece of most extraordinary power, and may rank its author with our first poets."

Lord Byron was, I need not say, the prime object of interest this season in the fashionable world of London; nor did the Prince Regent owe the subsequent hostilities of the noble Poet to any neglect on his part. Mr Murray, the publisher of the Romaunt, on hearing, on the 29th of June, Lord Byron's account of his introduction to his Royal Highness, conceived that, by communicating it to Scott, he might afford the opportunity of such a personal explanation between his two poetical friends, as should obliterate whatever painful feelings had survived the allusions

to Marmion in the English Bards and Scotch Reviewers; and this good-natured step had the desired consequences. Whether or not Scott supposed that Byron had been privy to Murray's movement, I cannot say; but the senior and the offended party considered that it became him to take the initiative. In his first letter to Byron, after some warm praise of Childe Harold, he passes to the old Marmion story and says:—"The poem, my Lord, was *not* written upon contract for a sum of money—though it is too true that it was sold and published in a very unfinished state (which I have since regretted), to enable me to extricate myself from some engagements which fell suddenly upon me, by the unexpected misfortunes of a very near relation. So that, to quote statute and precedent, I really come under the case cited by Juvenal, though not quite in the extremity of the classic author—

Esurit, intactam Paridi nisi vendit Agaven.

As for my attachment to literature, I sacrificed for the pleasure of pursuing it very fair chances of opulence and professional honours, at a time of life when I fully knew their value; and I am not ashamed to say that in deriving advantages in compensation from the partial favour of the public, I have added some comforts and elegancies to a bare independence. I am sure your Lordship's good sense will easily put this unimportant egotism to the right account, for—though I do not know the motive would make me enter into controversy with a fair or an *unfair* literary critic—I may be well excused for a wish to clear my personal character from any tinge of mercenary or sordid feeling in the eyes of a contemporary of genius. Your Lordship will likewise permit me to add, that you would have escaped the trouble of this explanation, had I not understood that the satire alluded to had been suppressed, not to be reprinted. For in removing a prejudice on your Lord-

ship's own mind, I had no intention of making any appeal by or through you to the public, since my own habits of life have rendered my defence as to avarice or rapacity rather too easy." Lord Byron in answer says :—"I feel sorry that you should have thought it worth while to notice the evil works of my nonage, as the thing is suppressed *voluntarily*, and your explanation is too kind not to give me pain. The Satire was written when I was very young and very angry, and fully bent on displaying my wrath and my wit, and now I am haunted by the ghosts of my wholesale assertions. I cannot sufficiently thank you for your praise; and now, waiving myself, let me talk to you of the Prince Regent. He ordered me to be presented to him at a ball: and after some sayings, peculiarly pleasing from royal lips, as to my own attempts, he talked to me of you and your immortalities; he preferred you to every bard past and present, and asked which of your works pleased me most. It was a difficult question. I answered, I thought the Lay. He said his own opinion was nearly similar. In speaking of the others, I told him that I thought you more particularly the poet of *Princes*, as *they* never appeared more fascinating than in Marmion and the Lady of the Lake. He was pleased to coincide, and to dwell on the description of your Jameses as no less royal than poetical. He spoke alternately of Homer and yourself, and seemed well acquainted with both. I defy Murray to have exaggerated his Royal Highness's opinion of your powers; but it may give you pleasure to hear that it was conveyed in language which would only suffer by my attempting to transcribe it; and with a tone and taste which gave me a very high idea of his abilities and accomplishments, which I had hitherto considered as confined to *manners*, certainly superior to those of any living *gentleman*." —Scott immediately (July 16) rejoined in terms of frank kindness, inviting Byron to visit him at Abbotsford, where he had now established himself.—"Although," he says, "I

am living in a gardener's hut, and although the adjacent ruins of Melrose have little to tempt one who has seen those of Athens, yet, should you take a tour which is so fashionable at this season, I should be very happy to have an opportunity of introducing you to anything remarkable in my fatherland. The fair, or shall I say the sage, Apreece that was, Lady Davy that is, is soon to show us how much science she leads captive in Sir Humphrey; so your Lordship sees, as the citizen's wife says in the farce, 'Threadneedle Street has some charms,' since they procure us such celebrated visitants. As for me, I would rather cross-question your Lordship about the outside of Parnassus, than learn the nature of the contents of all the other mountains in the world. Pray, when under 'its cloudy canopy' did you hear anything of the celebrated Pegasus? Some say he has been brought off with other curiosities to Britain, and now covers at Tattersal's. I would fain have a cross from him out of my little moss-trooper's Galloway, and I think your Lordship can tell me how to set about it, as I recognise his true paces in the high-mettled description of Ali Pacha's military court."

The correspondence thus begun erelong assumed a tone of unaffected friendliness equally honourable to both these great competitors, without rivalry, for the favour of the literary world.

The date of the letter last quoted immediately preceded that of Scott's second meeting with another of the most illustrious of his contemporaries. He had met Davy at Mr Wordsworth's when in the first flush of his celebrity in 1804, and been, as one of his letters states, much delighted with "the simple and unaffected style of his bearing—the most agreeable characteristic of high genius." Sir Humphrey, now at the summit of his fame, had come, by his marriage with Scott's accomplished relation, into possession of an ample fortune; and he and his bride were among the

first of the poet's visitants in the original cabin at Abbotsford.

It was also this year that the first correspondence took place between Scott and Crabbe. The contrast of their epistolary styles is highly amusing; for Mr Crabbe was as yet quite the simple country clergyman; but there is something better than amusement to be derived from observing the cordial confidence which a very little intercourse was sufficient to establish between men so different from each other in most of the habits of life. It will always be considered as one of the most pleasing peculiarities in Scott's history, that he was the friend of every great contemporary poet: yet I could hardly name one of them who, manly principles and the cultivation of literature apart, had many points of resemblance to him; and surely not one who had fewer than Crabbe.

He had finally left Ashestiel at Whitsuntide; and the day when this occurred was a sad one for many a poor neighbour—for they lost, both in him and his wife, very generous protectors. In such a place, among the few evils which counterbalance so many good things in the condition of the peasantry, the most afflicting is the want of access to medical advice. As far as their means and skill would go, they had both done their utmost to supply this want; and Mrs Scott, in particular, had made it her business to visit the sick in their scattered cottages, and bestowed on them the contents of her medicine-chest as well as of the larder and cellar, with the same unwearied kindness that I observed in her afterwards as lady of Abbotsford. Their children remembered the parting scene as one of unmixed affliction—but it had had its lighter features. Among the English friends whom Scott owed to his frequent visits at Rokeby, none had a higher place in his regard than Lady Alvanley, the widow of the celebrated Chief-Justice of the Common Pleas. To her, on the 25th, he says,—"The neighbours have been

much delighted with the procession of my furniture, in which old swords, bows, targets, and lances, made a very conspicuous show. A family of turkeys was accommodated within the helmet of some *preux* chevalier of ancient Border fame; and the very cows, for aught I know, were bearing banners and muskets. I assure your ladyship that this caravan, attended by a dozen of ragged rosy peasant children, carrying fishing-rods and spears, and leading poneys, greyhounds, and spaniels, would, as it crossed the Tweed, have furnished no bad subject for the pencil, and really reminded me of one of the gypsey groupes of Callot upon their march."

The necessary alterations on the old farm-house immediately commenced; and besides raising its roof and projecting some of the lower windows, a rustic porch, a supplemental cottage at one end, and a fountain to the south, soon made their appearance.

CHAPTER VII.

Publication of Rokeby and the Bridal of Triermain—Commercial difficulties—Reconciliation with Constable—Death of Weber—Voyage to the Shetland, Orkney, and Hebridean Islands—Publication of the Life and Works of Swift—and of Waverley—1812–1814.

This was one of the busiest summers of his busy life. Till the 12th of July he was at his post in the Court of Session five days every week; but every Saturday evening found him at Abbotsford, to observe the progress his labourers had made within doors and without in his absence; and on Monday night he returned to Edinburgh. Even before the Summer Session commenced, he appears to have made some advance in his Rokeby, for he writes to Mr Morritt, from Abbotsford, on the 4th of May—"As for the house and the poem, there are twelve masons hammering at the one, and one poor noddle at the other—so they are both in progress;" and his literary tasks throughout the long vacation were continued under the same sort of disadvantage. That autumn he had, in fact, no room at all for himself. The only parlour which had been hammered into habitable condition, served at once for dining-room, drawing-room, school-room, and study. A window looking to the river was kept sacred to his desk; an old bed-curtain was nailed up across the room close behind his chair, and there, whenever the spade, the dibble, or the chisel (for he took his full share in all the work on hand) was laid aside, he plied his pen, apparently undisturbed and unannoyed by the surrounding confusion of masons and carpenters, to say

nothing of the lady's small talk, the children's babble among themselves, or their repetition of their lessons. The truth no doubt was, that when at his desk he did little more, as far as regarded *poetry*, than write down the lines which he had fashioned in his mind while pursuing his vocation as a planter. By and by, he says to Terry:—"The acorns are coming up fast, and Tom Purdie is the happiest and most consequential person in the world. My present work is building up the well with some *debris* from the Abbey. The worst of all is, that while my trees grow and my fountain fills, my purse, in an inverse ratio, sinks to zero." He then adds that he has at least been relieved of one of his daily labours, that of hearing his boy Walter's lesson, by "a gallant son of the church, who with one leg of wood, and another of oak, walks to and fro from Melrose every day for that purpose." This was Mr George Thomson, son of the minister of Melrose, who, when the house afforded better accommodation, was and continued for many years to be domesticated at Abbotsford. Scott had always a particular tenderness towards persons afflicted with any bodily misfortune; and Thomson, whose leg had been amputated in consequence of a rough casualty of his boyhood, had a special share in his favour from the high spirit with which he refused at the time to betray the name of the companion that had occasioned his mishap, and continued ever afterwards to struggle against its disadvantages. Tall, vigorous, athletic, a dauntless horseman, and expert at the singlestick, George formed a valuable as well as picturesque addition to the *tail* of the new laird, who often said, "In the Dominie, like myself, accident has spoiled a capital life-guardsman." His many oddities and eccentricities in no degree interfered with the respect due to his amiable feelings, upright principles, and sound learning; nor did *Dominie Thamson* at all quarrel in after times with the universal credence of the neighbourhood that he had furnished many features for the inimitable personage whose designation so

nearly resembled his own; and if he never "wagged his head" in a "pulpit o' his ain," he well knew it was not for want of earnest and long-continued intercession on the part of the author of Guy Mannering.

For many years Scott had accustomed himself to proceed in the composition of poetry along with that of prose essays of various descriptions; but it is a remarkable fact that he chose this period of perpetual noise and bustle, when he had not even a summer-house to himself, for the new experiment of carrying on two poems at the same time—and this too without suspending the heavy labour of his Swift, to say nothing of lesser matters in which the Ballantynes were, from day to day, calling for the assistance of his judgment and his pen. In the same letter in which Erskine acknowledges the receipt of the first four pages of Rokeby, he adverts also to the Bridal of Triermain as in rapid progress. Certain fragments of verse which were mentioned as being inserted in the Register of 1811 under the guise of *Imitations of Walter Scott*, had attracted considerable notice; the secret of their authorship was well kept; and by some means, even in the shrewdest circles of Edinburgh, the belief had become prevalent that they came from Erskine. Scott had no sooner completed his bargain as to Rokeby, than he resolved to pause from time to time in its composition, and weave those fragments into a lighter romance, to be published anonymously, in a small volume, as nearly as possible on the same day with the avowed quarto. He expected great amusement from the comparisons which the critics would no doubt indulge themselves in drawing between himself and this humble candidate; and Erskine good-humouredly entered into the scheme, undertaking to do nothing which should effectually suppress the notion of his having set himself up as a modest rival to his friend. Nay, he suggested a further refinement, which in the sequel had no small share in the success of this little plot upon the sagacity of the reviewers. "To prevent," he writes, "any

discovery from your prose, what think you of putting down your ideas of what the preface ought to contain, and allowing me to write it over? And perhaps a quizzing review might be concocted." This hint was welcome; and among other parts of the preface to *The Bridal of Triermain* which "threw out the knowing ones," certain Greek quotations are now accounted for. Scott, on his part, appears to have studiously interwoven into the piece allusions to personal feelings and experiences more akin to his friend's history and character than to his own; and he did so still more largely, when repeating this experiment, in Harold the Dauntless.

The same post which conveyed Erskine's letter above quoted, brought him an equally wise and kind one in answer to a fresh application for details about the Valley of the Tees. Scott had promised to spend part of this autumn with Morritt; but now, busied with his planting, and continually urged by Ballantyne to have the Quarto ready by Christmas, he would willingly have trusted his friend's knowledge in place of his own research. Morritt urgently represented, in reply, the expediency of a leisurely personal inspection; adding, "I shall always feel your friendship as an honour: we all wish our honours to be permanent: and yours promises mine at least a fair chance of immortality. I hope, however, you will not be obliged to write in a hurry. If you want a few hundreds independent of these booksellers, your credit is so very good, now that you have got rid of your Old Man of the Sea, that it is no great merit to trust you, and I happen at this moment to have five or six for which I have no sort of demand:—so rather than be obliged to spur Pegasus beyond the power of pulling him up when he is going too fast, do consult your own judgment, and set the midwives of the trade at defiance." This appeal was not to be resisted. Scott accepted Morritt's friendly offer so far as to ask his assistance in having some of his printer's bills discounted: and he proceeded the week after

to Rokeby, travelling on horseback, his eldest boy and girl on their poneys, while Mrs Scott followed in the carriage. Halting at Flodden to expound the field to his young folks, he found that Marmion had benefited the public house there very largely; and the village Boniface, overflowing with gratitude, expressed his anxiety to have a *Scott's Head* for his sign-post. The poet demurred to this proposal, and assured mine host that nothing could be more appropriate than the portraiture of a foaming tankard, which already surmounted his door-way. "Why, the painter-man has not made an ill job," said the landlord, "but I would fain have something more connected with the book that has brought me so much custom." He produced a well-thumbed copy, and handing it to the author, begged he would at least suggest a motto from the tale of Flodden Field. Scott opened the book at the death scene of the hero, and his eye was immediately caught by the "Inscription" in black letter—

> "Drink, weary pilgrim, drink, and pray
> For the kind soul of Sibyl Grey."

"Well, my friend," said he, "what more would you have? You need but strike out one letter in the first of these lines, and make your painter-man, the next time he comes this way, print between the jolly tankard and your own name

> 'Drink, weary pilgrim, drink and PAY.'"

Scott was delighted to find, on his return, that this suggestion had been adopted, and for aught I know, the romantic legend may still be visible.

At Rokeby he remained about a week; and how he spent it is well told in Mr Morritt's *Memorandum*:—"The morning after he arrived he said—'You have often given me materials for romance—now I want a good robber's cave, and an old church of the right sort.' We rode out, and he found what he wanted in the

ancient slate quarries of Brignal and the ruined Abbey of Egglestone. I observed him noting down even the peculiar little wild-flowers and herbs on the side of a bold crag near his intended cave of Guy Denzil; and could not help saying, that as he was not to be upon oath in his work, daisies, violets, and primroses would be as poetical as any of the humble plants he was examining. I laughed, in short, at his scrupulousness; but I understood him when he replied, 'that in nature herself no two scenes were exactly alike, and that whoever copied truly what was before his eyes, would possess the same variety in his descriptions, and exhibit apparently an imagination as boundless as the range of nature in the scenes he recorded; whereas—whoever trusted to imagination, would soon find his own mind circumscribed and contracted to a few favourite images, and the repetition of these would sooner or later produce that very monotony and barrenness which had always haunted descriptive poetry in the hands of any but the patient worshippers of truth. Besides which,' he said, 'local names and peculiarities make a fictitious story look so much better in the face.' In fact, from his boyish habits, he was but half satisfied with the most beautiful scenery when he could not connect with it some local legend, and when I was forced sometimes to confess with the Knife-grinder, 'Story! God bless you! I have none to tell, sir'—he would laugh and say, 'then let us make one—nothing so easy as to make a tradition.'" Mr Morritt adds, that he had brought with him about half the bridal of Triermain—and promised himself particular satisfaction in *laying a trap for Jeffrey.*

Crowded as this year was with multifarious cares and tasks—the rómance of Rokeby was finished before the close of 1812. Though it had been long in hand, the MS. bears abundant evidence of its being the *prima cura:* three cantos at least reached the printer through the Melrose post—written on paper of various sorts and sizes—full of blots and interlineations—the closing couplets of a despatch now

and then encircling the page, and mutilated by the breaking of the seal.

According to the recollection of Mr Cadell, though James Ballantyne read the poem, as the sheets were advancing, to his usual circle of *dilettanti*, their whispers were far from exciting in Edinburgh such an intensity of expectation as had been witnessed in the case of The Lady of the Lake. He adds, however, that it was looked for with undiminished anxiety in the south. I well remember, being in those days a young student at Oxford, how the booksellers' shops there were beleaguered for the earliest copies, and how he that had been so fortunate as to secure one was followed to his chambers by a tribe of friends, all as eager to hear it read as ever horse-jockeys were to see the conclusion of a match at Newmarket; and indeed not a few of those enthusiastic academics had bets depending on the issue of the struggle, which they considered the elder favourite as making to keep his own ground against the fiery rivalry of Childe Harold.

On the day of publication (January 12, 1813), Scott writes gaily enough to Morritt, from his seat at the Clerks' table:—"The book has gone off here very bobbishly; for the impression of 3000 and upwards is within two or three score of being exhausted, and the demand for these continuing faster than they can be boarded. I am heartily glad of this, for now I have nothing to fear but a bankruptcy in the Gazette of Parnassus; but the loss of five or six thousand pounds to my good friends and school companions would have afflicted me very much. I wish we could whistle you here to-day. Ballantyne always gives a christening dinner, at which the Duke of Buccleuch[1] and a great many of my friends are formally feasted. He has always the best singing that can be heard in Edinburgh, and we have usually a very pleasant party, at which your

[1] Charles Earl of Dalkeith became Duke of Buccleuch in January 1812, on the death of Duke Henry his father.

health as patron and proprietor of Rokeby will be faithfully and honourably remembered."

It will surprise no one to hear that Mr Morritt assured his friend he considered Rokeby as the best of all his poems. The admirable, perhaps the unique fidelity of the local descriptions, might alone have swayed, for I will not say it perverted, the judgment of the lord of that beautiful and thenceforth classical domain; and, indeed, I must admit that I never understood or appreciated half the charm of this poem until I had become familiar with its scenery. But Scott himself had not designed to rest his strength on these descriptions. He said to his printer while the work was in progress (September), "I hope the thing will do, chiefly because the world will not expect from *me* a poem of which the interest turns upon *character*;" and in another letter (October), "I think you will see the same sort of difference taken in all my former poems,—of which I would say, if it is fair for me to say anything, that the force in the Lay is thrown on style—in Marmion, on description—and in the Lady of the Lake, on incident." Possibly some of these distinctions may have been matters of afterthought; but as to Rokeby there can be no mistake. Of its principal characters no one who compares the poem with his novels will doubt that, had he undertaken their portraiture in prose, they would have come forth with effect hardly inferior to any of all the groupes he ever created. As it is, I question whether even in his prose there is anything more exquisitely wrought out, as well as fancied, than the whole contrast of the two rivals for the love of the heroine; and that heroine herself has a very particular interest attached to her. Writing to Miss Edgeworth five years after this time (1818), he says, "I have not read one of my poems since they were printed, excepting last year the Lady of the Lake, which I liked better than I expected, but not well enough to induce me to go through the rest—so I may truly say with Macbeth—

I am afraid to think of what I've done—
Look on't again I dare not.

This much of *Matilda* I recollect—(for that is not so easily forgotten)—that she was attempted for the existing person of a lady who is now no more, so that I am particularly flattered with your distinguishing it from the others, which are in general mere shadows." I can have no doubt that the lady he here alludes to, was the object of his own unfortunate first love; and as little, that in the romantic generosity, both of the youthful poet who fails to win her higher favour, and of his chivalrous competitor, we have before us something more than a mere shadow.

In spite of these graceful characters, the inimitable scenery on which they are presented, and the splendid vivacity and thrilling interest of several chapters in the story—such as the opening interview of Bertram and Wycliff—the flight up the cliff on the Greta—the first entrance of the cave at Brignall—the firing of Rokeby Castle—and the catastrophe in Egglestone Abbey;—in spite certainly of exquisitely happy lines profusely scattered throughout the whole composition, and of some detached images—that of the setting of the tropical sun in Canto VI., for example—which were never surpassed by any poet;—in spite of all these merits, the immediate success of Rokeby was greatly inferior to that of the Lady of the Lake; nor has it ever since been so much a favourite with the public at large as any other of his poetical romances. He ascribes this failure, in his Introduction of 1830, partly to the radically unpoetical character of the Roundheads; but surely their character has its poetical side also, had his prejudices allowed him to enter upon its study with impartial sympathy. Partly he blames the satiety of the public ear, which had had so much of his rhythm, not only from himself, but from dozens of mocking-birds, male and female, all more or less applauded in their day, and now all equally forgotten. This circumstance, too, had probably no slender

effect; the more that, in defiance of all the hints of his friends, he now repeated (with more negligence) the uniform octosyllabic couplets of the Lady of the Lake, instead of recurring to the more varied cadence of the Lay or Marmion. It is fair to add that, among the London circles at least, some sarcastic flings in Mr Moore's "Twopenny Post Bag" may have had an unfavourable influence on this occasion.[1] But the cause of failure which the poet himself places last, was unquestionably the main one. The deeper and darker passion of Childe Harold, the audacity of its morbid voluptuousness, and the melancholy majesty of the numbers in which it defied the world, had taken the general imagination by storm; and Rokeby, with many beauties and some sublimities, was pitched, as a whole, on a key which seemed tame in the comparison.

I have already adverted to the fact that Scott felt it a relief, not a fatigue, to compose the Bridal of Triermain *pari passu* with Rokeby. In answer, for example, to one of his printer's letters, he says, "I fully share in your anxiety to get forward the grand work; but, I assure you, I feel the more confidence from coquetting with the guerilla." The quarto was followed, within two months, by the small volume which had been designed for a twin-birth; —the MS. had been transcribed by one of the Ballantynes themselves, in order to guard against any indiscretion of the press-people; and the mystification, aided and abetted by Erskine, in no small degree heightened the interest of its reception. Except Morritt, Scott had no English confidant. Whether any of his companions in the Parliament House were in the secret, I have never heard; but I can scarcely believe that any of those who had known him and Erskine from their youth upwards, could have believed the latter capable either of the invention or the execution of this airy and fascinating romance in little. Mr Jeffrey, as it happened, made a voyage that year to America, and thus

[1] See the Epistle of Lady Corke—and that of Messrs Lackington.

lost the opportunity of immediately expressing his opinion either of Rokeby or of Triermain. The Quarterly critic seems to have been completely deceived. "The diction (he says) undoubtedly reminds us of a rhythm and cadence we have heard before; but the sentiments, descriptions, and characters, have qualities that are native and unborrowed." If this writer was (as I suppose) Ellis, he no doubt considered it as impossible that Scott should have engaged in such a scheme without giving him a hint of it; but to have admitted into the secret any one who was likely to criticise the piece seriously, would have been to sacrifice the very object of the device. Erskine's own suggestion, that "perhaps a quizzical review might be got up," led, I believe, to nothing more important than a paragraph in one of the Edinburgh newspapers. He may be pardoned for having been not a little flattered to find it generally considered as not impossible that he should have written such a poem; and I have heard James Ballantyne say, that nothing could be more amusing than the style of his coquetting on the subject while it was yet fresh; but when this first excitement was over, his natural feeling of what was due to himself, as well as to his friend, dictated many a remonstrance; and, though he ultimately acquiesced in permitting another minor romance to be put forth in the same manner, he did so reluctantly, and was far from acting his part so well.

Scott says, in the Introduction to the Lord of the Isles —"As Mr Erskine was more than suspected of a taste for poetry, and as I took care, in several places, to mix something that might resemble (as far as was in my power) my friend's feeling and manner, the train easily caught, and two large editions were sold." Among the passages to which he here alludes, are no doubt those in which the character of the minstrel Arthur is shaded with the colourings of an almost effeminate gentleness. Yet, in the midst of them, the "mighty minstrel" himself, from time to time, escapes; as, for instance, where the lover bids Lucy, in

that exquisite picture of crossing a mountain stream, trust to his "stalwart arm"—

> "Which could yon oak's prone trunk uprear."

Nor can I pass the compliment to Scott's own fair patroness, where Lucy's admirer is made to confess, with some momentary lapse of gallantry, that he

> "Ne'er won—best meed to minstrel true—
> One favouring smile from fair Buccleuch."

But, above all, the choice of the scenery reveals the treasured predilections of the poet. For who that remembers the circumstances of his first visit to the vale of St John, but must recognize the impress of his own real romance?

As a whole, the Bridal of Triermain appears to me as characteristic of Scott as any of his larger poems. His genius pervades and animates it beneath a thin and playful veil, which perhaps adds as much of grace as it takes away of splendour. As Wordsworth says of the eclipse on the lake of Lugano—

> "'Tis sunlight sheathed and gently charmed;"

and I think there is at once a lightness and a polish of versification beyond what he has elsewhere attained. If it be a miniature, it is such a one as a Cooper might have hung fearlessly beside the masterpieces of Vandyke.

The Introductions contain some of the most exquisite passages he ever produced; but their general effect has always struck me as unfortunate. No art can reconcile us to contemptuous satire of the merest frivolities of modern life—some of them already grown obsolete—interlaid between such bright visions of the old world of romance. The fall is grievous from the hoary minstrel of Newark and his feverish tears on Killiecrankie, to a pathetic swain who can stoop to denounce as objects of his jealousy

> "The landaulet and four blood bays—
> The Hessian boot and pantaloon."

Before Triermain came out, Scott had taken wing for Abbotsford; and indeed he seems to have so contrived it in his earlier period, that he should not be in Edinburgh when any unavowed work was published; whereas, from the first, in the case of books that bore his name on the title-page, he walked as usual to the Parliament House, and bore all the buzz and tattle of friends and acquaintance with an air of good-humoured equanimity, or rather of total indifference.

The limits of this narrative do not admit of minute details concerning the commercial adventures in which Scott was entangled; and those of the period we have now reached are so painful that I am very willing to spare them. By the spring of 1813 the crisis in the war affected credit universally; and while the oldest firms in every department of the trade of literature had difficulties to contend with, the pressure brought many of humbler resources to extremity. It was so with the house of *John Ballantyne & Co.;* which had started with no solid capital except what Scott supplied; and had been entrusted to one who never looked beyond the passing day—availed himself with a blind recklessness of the system of discounting and renewing bills—and, though attached to Scott by the strongest ties of grateful veneration, yet allowed himself to neglect month after month the most important of his duties—that of keeping the only moneyed partner accurately informed as to the actual obligations and resources of the establishment.

Mr John's loose methods of transacting business had soon cooled the alliance between his firm and the great Tory publisher of London. Murray's Scotch agency was taken away—he retained hardly any connection with Scott himself, except as a contributor to his Review, and from time to time a friendly visitor in Albemarle Street; and under these altered circumstances, I do not see how the whole concern of John Ballantyne & Co. could

have escaped the necessity of an abrupt and disastrous exposure within but a few weeks after the appearance of the *Triermain*, had not the personal differences with Constable been by that time healed. Mr Hunter had now retired from that house; and Constable, released from his influence, had been watching with hope the unconcealable complication in the affairs of this fragile rival. Constable had never faultered in his conviction that Scott must continue to be the ruling spirit in the literature of their age: and there were few sacrifices which that sanguine man would not have made to regain his hold on the unmatched author. The Ballantynes saw the opening for help, and their advances were well met; but some quite unexpected calls on Scott compelled him to interfere directly, and he began in his own person a negotiation which, though at the time he likened it to that of the treaty of Amiens, was far from being capriciously protracted, or from leading only to a brief and barren truce. Constable, flattered *in limine* by the offer, on fair terms, of a fourth part of the remaining copyright of Rokeby, agreed to relieve the labouring firm of a mass of its stock: the partners to exert themselves in getting rid of the residue, and then wind up their publishing concern with all convenient speed. This was a great relief: on the 18th of May 1813, Scott writes to Mr John—"For the first time these many weeks, I shall lay my head on a quiet pillow:" but there was still much to be achieved. The warehouse must still groan under unsaleable quires—the desk, too late explored, shewed a dismal vista of approaching demand. Scott was too just not to take something of the blame upon himself; the accumulated stock bore witness against too many of his own plans and suggestions: nor could he acquit himself of carelessness in not having forced the manager to greater exactness in the detailing of accounts. But still he felt that he had serious reason for complaint; and the letter of which a sentence has just been quoted

ends in these words, which ought to have produced the deeper impression because of their gentleness :—" Adieu, my dear John. If I have ever expressed myself with irritation in speaking of this business, you must impute it to *the sudden, extensive, and unexpected embarrassments in which I found myself involved all at once.* If to your real goodness of heart and integrity, and to the quickness and acuteness of your talents, you added habits of more universal circumspection, and, above all, the courage to tell disagreeable truths to those whom you hold in regard, I pronounce that the world never held such a man of business. These it must be your study to add to your other good qualities. Meantime, as some one says to Swift, I love you with all your failings. Pray make an effort and love me with all mine. Yours truly, W.S."

" P. S.—James has behaved very well during this whole transaction, and has been most steadily attentive to business. I am convinced that the more he works the better his health will be. *One or other of you will need to be constantly in the printing-office henceforward*—it is the sheet-anchor."

The allusion in this *postscript* to the printer's health reminds me that Scott's letters to himself are full of hints on that subject, even from a very early period of their connexion; and these hints are all to the same effect. One letter (Ashestiel, 1810) will be a sufficient specimen : —" I am very sorry for the state of your health, and should be still more so, were I not certain that I can prescribe for you as well as any physician in Edinburgh. You have naturally an athletic constitution and a hearty stomach, and these agree very ill with a sedentary life and the habits of indolence which it brings on. You must positively put yourself on a regimen as to eating, not for a month or two, but for a year at least, and take regular exercise—and my life for yours."—Among the early pets at Abbotsford there was a huge raven, whose powers of

speech were remarkable, and who died in consequence of an equally remarkable voracity. Thenceforth, Scott often repeated to his old friend, and occasionally scribbled by way of postscript to his notes on business—

> "When you are craving,
> Remember the Raven."

Sometimes the formula is varied to—

> "When you've dined half,
> Think on poor Ralph!"

His preachments of regularity in book-keeping to John, and of abstinence from good cheer to James, were equally vain; but, on the other hand, it must be allowed that the "hard skirmishes," as he calls them, of May 1813, do not seem to have left on himself all the impression that might have been anticipated. He was in the most vigorous of his prime: his temperament was buoyant and hopeful: nothing had occurred to check his confidence in the resources of his own genius and industry. So it was, that ere many weeks had passed, he was preparing fresh embarrassments for himself by bidding for another parcel of land. As early as the 20th of June he writes to Constable as being already aware of this matter, and alleges his anxiety "to close at once with a very capricious person," as the only reason that could have induced him to offer for L.5000 the whole copyright of an as yet unwritten poem, to be called "The Nameless Glen." A long correspondence ensued, in the course of which Scott mentions "the Lord of the Isles," as a title which had suggested itself to him in place of "The Nameless Glen;" but as the negotiation did not succeed, I may pass its details. The new property which he was so eager to acquire, was that hilly tract stretching from the old Roman road near Turn-again towards the Cauldshiels Loch: a then desolate and naked mountain-mere, which he likens, in a letter of this summer, to the Lake of the

Genie and the Fisherman in the Arabian Tale. To obtain this lake at one extremity of his estate, as a contrast to the Tweed at the other, was a prospect for which hardly any sacrifice would have appeared too much; and he contrived to gratify his wishes in the course of July. Nor was he, I must add, more able to control some of his minor tastes. I find him writing to Terry on the same 20th of June, about "that splendid lot of ancient armour, advertised by Winstanley," a celebrated auctioneer in London, of which he had the strongest fancy to make spoil, though he was at a loss to know where it should be placed when it reached Abbotsford; and on the 2d of July, this acquisition also having been settled, he says to the same correspondent—"I have written to Mr Winstanley. My bargain with Constable was otherwise arranged, but little John is to find the needful article, and I shall take care of Mr Winstanley's interest, who has behaved too handsomely in this matter to be trusted to the mercy of our little friend the Picaroon, who is, notwithstanding his many excellent qualities, a little on the score of old Gobbo—doth somewhat smack—somewhat grow to."

On the 12th of July, as usual, he removed to Tweedside; but he had not long enjoyed himself in sketching out woods and walks for the borders of his Fairy Lake before he received sharp admonishment. Two lines of a letter to the "little Picaroon," dated July 24th, speak already to a series of annoyances:—"Dear John,—I sent you the order, and have only to hope it arrived safe and in good time. I waked the boy at three o'clock myself, having slept little, less on account of the money than of the time. Surely you should have written, three or four days before, the probable amount of the deficit, and, as on former occasions, I would have furnished you with means of meeting it. These expresses, besides every other inconvenience, excite surprise in my family and in the neighbourhood. I know no justifiable occasion for them but the unexpected

return of a bill. I do not consider you as answerable for the success of plans, but I do and must hold you responsible for giving me, in distinct and plain terms, your opinion as to any difficulties which may occur, and that in such time that I may make arrangements to obviate them if possible."

The affair of the 24th itself was aggravated by the circumstance that Scott had been prepared to start on the 25th for a visit in a different county: so that the worst consequences that had so late alarmed his *manager*, must have been after all unavoidable if he had deferred his messenger but a few hours more.

Scott proceeded, accordingly, to join a gay and festive circle, whom the Duke of Buccleuch had assembled about him on first taking possession of the magnificent Castle of Drumlanrig, in Nithsdale, the principal messuage of the dukedom of Queensberry, which had recently lapsed into his family. But *post equitem sedet atra cura*—a second and a third of these unwelcome missives, rendered necessary by neglect of precisely the same kind, reached him in the midst of this scene of rejoicing.

He had been engaged also to meet the Marquis of Abercorn at Carlisle, in the first week of August, on business connected with his brother Thomas's late administration of that nobleman's affairs; and he had designed to pass from Drumlanrig to Carlisle for his purpose, without going back to Abbotsford. In consequence of these repeated harassments, however, he so far altered his plans as to cut short his stay at Drumlanrig, and turn homewards for two or three days, where James Ballantyne met him with such a statement as in some measure relieved his mind.

He then proceeded to fulfil his engagement with Lord Abercorn, whom he encountered travelling in a rather peculiar style between Carlisle and Longtown. The ladies of the family and the household occupied four or five carriages, all drawn by the Marquis's own horses, while the

noble Lord himself brought up the rear, mounted on horseback, and decorated with the ribbon of the Garter. On meeting the cavalcade, Scott turned with them, and he was not a little amused when they reached the village of Longtown, which he had ridden through an hour before, with the preparations which he found there made for the dinner of the party. The Marquis's major-domo and cook had arrived there early in the morning, and everything was now arranged for his reception in the little public house, as nearly as possible in the style of his own mansions. The ducks and geese that had been dabbling three or four hours ago in the village pond, were now ready to make their appearance under numberless disguises; a regular bill-of-fare flanked the Marquis's allotted cover; every huckaback towel in the place had been pressed to do service as a napkin; and the landlady's poor remnants of crockery had been furbished up, and mustered in solemn order on a crazy beauffet, which was to represent a sideboard worthy of Lucullus. I think it worth while to preserve this anecdote, which Scott delighted in telling, as perhaps the last relic of a style of manners now passed away, and never likely to be revived among us.

Having despatched this dinner and his business, Scott again turned southwards, intending to spend a few days at Rokeby; but on reaching Penrith, the landlord placed a letter in his hands: *ecce iterum*—it was once more a cry of distress from John Ballantyne. Having once more despatched a cheque and a gentle remonstrance to Edinburgh, he rode on to Brough; but there he received such a painful account of Mrs Morritt's health, that he abandoned his intention of proceeding to Rokeby; and indeed it was much better that he should be at Abbotsford again; for by this time the whole of these affairs had reached a second *crisis*. Again Constable was consulted; and now a detailed statement was submitted to him. On examining it, he so expressed himself, that all the partners

concurred in the necessity of submitting forthwith to steps not less decisive than painful. Constable again relieved them of some of their crushing stock; but he frankly owned that he could not do in that way enough to serve them effectually; and Scott was constrained to have recourse to the Duke of Buccleuch, who with the kindest promptitude gave him a guarantee to the extent of £4000, immediately available in the money market—the poet insuring his life for that sum, and depositing the insurance as security with the Duke; while John Ballantyne agreed, in place of a leisurely winding up of the publishing affair, to terminate it with the utmost possible speed, and endeavour to establish himself as an auctioneer of books, antiquities, and objects of vertu. How bitterly must Scott have felt his situation when he wrote thus to John on the 16th August:—"With regard to the printing, it is my intention to retire from that also so soon as I can possibly do so with safety to myself, and with the regard I shall always entertain for James's interest. Whatever loss I may sustain will be preferable to the life I have lately led, when I seem surrounded by a sort of magic circle, which neither permits me to remain at home in peace, nor to stir abroad with pleasure. Your first exertion as an auctioneer may probably be on 'that distinguished, select, and inimitable collection of books, made by an amateur of this city retiring from business.' I do not feel either health or confidence in my own powers sufficient to authorize me to take a long price for a new poem, until these affairs shall have been in some measure digested." There still remained a difficult digestion. His correspondence on to Christmas is deeply chequered; but the nature of the details may be guessed by such as have had experience in the merchandise of literature; and few others, I suppose, will regret their curtailment.

It was in the midst of these distressing occurrences that

Scott received two letters—one from Dr Stanier Clarke, private librarian to the Regent, and another, more formal, from the Marquis of Hertford, Lord Chamberlain, announcing His Royal Highness's desire to nominate him to the office of Poet-laureate, which had just fallen vacant by the death of Mr Pye. Its emoluments were understood by him to be "L.400, or at least L.300 a-year;" at that time such an accession of income must have been welcome; and at any rate, what the Sovereign designed as a favour and a distinction could not be lightly waived by Walter Scott. He felt, however, that holding already two lucrative offices in the gift of the Crown, he could not gracefully accept a third, entirely unconnected with his own legal profession, while so many eminent men remained wholly dependent on their literary exertions; and the friends whom he consulted, especially the Duke of Buccleuch, all concurring in the propriety of these scruples, he declined the royal offer. It is evident that from the first he had had Mr Southey's case in his contemplation. The moment he made up his mind as to himself, he wrote to Mr Croker and others in the Prince Regent's confidence, suggesting that name: and he had soon to congratulate his friend of Keswick on assuming the official laurel, which "had been worn of old by Dryden and more lately by Warton." Mr Southey, in an essay long subsequent to his death, says—"Sir Walter's conduct was, as it always was, characteristically friendly and generous."

This happened in September. October brought another succession of John Ballantyne's missives, to one of which Scott answers:—"For Heaven's sake, treat me as a man, not as a milch-cow;"—and a third crisis, at the approach of the Martinmas term, was again weathered with the narrowest difficulty—chiefly, as before, through the intervention of Constable. All these annoyances produced no change whatever in his habits of industry. During these anxious months of September, October, and November, he kept feeding

the press from day to day both with the annotated text of the closing volumes of Swift's works, and with the MS. of his Life of the Dean. He had also proceeded to mature in his mind the plan of the Lord of the Isles, and executed such a portion of the First Canto as gave him confidence to renew his negotiation with Constable for the sale of the whole, or part of its copyright. It was, moreover, at this period, that his eye chanced to light once more on the Ashestiel fragment of *Waverley*. He read over those introductory chapters—thought they had been undervalued—and determined to finish the story.

It is proper to mention, that, in the very agony of these perplexities, the unfortunate Maturin received from him a timely succour of L.50, rendered doubly acceptable by the kind and judicious letter of advice in which it was enclosed; and I have before me ample evidence that his benevolence had been extended to other struggling brothers of the trade, even when he must often have had actual difficulty to meet the immediate expenditure of his own family.

The great successes of the Allied Powers in the campaigns of 1813 gave a salutary stimulus to commercial enterprise: and the return of general confidence facilitated many arrangements in which Scott's interests were involved. He, however, needed no such considerations to heighten his patriotic enthusiasm, which overflowed in two songs—one of them never since, I believe, omitted at any celebration of the anniversary of Mr Pitt's death—

> "O dread was the time and more dreadful the omen,
> When the brave on Marengo lay slaughter'd in vain."

He also wrote an address to the Sovereign for the Magistracy of Edinburgh, which was privately acknowledged to the penman, by his Royal Highness's command, as "the most elegant congratulation a sovereign ever received or a subject offered." The Magistrates accordingly found particular graciousness at Carlton House; and on their re-

turn (Christmas, 1813) presented Scott with the freedom of his native city and a very handsome piece of plate.

I must, however, open the year 1814 with a melancholy story. Mention has been made in connection with an unlucky edition of Beaumont and Fletcher, of Henry Weber, a German scholar, who, escaping to this country in 1804, from misfortunes in his own, excited Scott's compassion, and was thenceforth furnished, through his means, with literary employment of various sorts. Weber was a man of considerable learning; but Scott, as was his custom, appears to have formed an exaggerated notion of his capacity, and certainly countenanced him, to his own severe cost, in several most unhappy undertakings. When not engaged on things of a more ambitious character, he had acted for ten years as his protector's amanuensis, and when the family were in Edinburgh, he very often dined with them. There was something very interesting in his appearance and manners: he had a fair, open countenance, in which the honesty and the enthusiasm of his nation were alike visible; his demeanour was gentle and modest; and he had not only a stock of curious antiquarian knowledge, but the reminiscences, which he detailed with amusing simplicity, of an early life chequered with many strange-enough adventures. He was, in short, much a favourite with Scott and all the household; and was invited to dine with them so frequently, chiefly because his friend was aware that he had an unhappy propensity to drinking, and was anxious to keep him away from places where he might have been more likely to indulge it. This vice had been growing on him; and of late Scott had found it necessary to make some rather severe remonstrances about habits which were at once injuring his health and interrupting his literary industry. They had, however, parted kindly when Scott left Edinburgh at Christmas; and the day after his return, Weber attended him as usual in his library—being employed in transcribing extracts during several hours, while

his friend, seated over against him, continued working at the Life of Swift. The light beginning to fail, Scott threw himself back in his chair, and was about to ring for candles, when he observed the German's eyes fixed upon him with an unusual solemnity of expression. "Weber," said he, "what's the matter with you?" "Mr Scott," said Weber, rising, "you have long insulted me, and I can bear it no longer. I have brought a pair of pistols with me, and must insist on your taking one of them instantly;" and with that he produced the weapons, which had been deposited under his chair, and laid one of them on Scott's manuscript. "You are mistaken, I think," said Scott, "in your way of setting about this affair—but no matter. It can, however, be no part of your object to annoy Mrs Scott and the children; therefore, if you please, we will put the pistols into the drawer till after dinner, and then arrange to go out together like gentlemen." Weber answered with equal coolness, "I believe that will be better," and laid the second pistol also on the table. Scott locked them both in his desk, and said, "I am glad you have felt the propriety of what I suggested—let me only request farther, that nothing may occur while we are at dinner to give my wife any suspicion of what has been passing." Weber again assented, and Scott withdrew to his dressing-room, from which he despatched a message to one of Weber's companions,—and then dinner was served, and Weber joined the circle as usual. He conducted himself with composure, and everything seemed to go on in the ordinary way, until whisky and hot water being produced, Scott, instead of inviting his guest to help himself, mixed two moderate tumblers of toddy, and handed one of them to Weber, who, upon that, started up with a furious countenance, but instantly sat down again, and when Mrs Scott expressed her fear that he was ill, answered placidly that he was liable to spasms, but that the pain was gone. He then took the glass, eagerly gulped

down its contents, and pushed it back to Scott. At this moment the friend who had been sent for made his appearance; and Weber, on seeing him enter the room, rushed past him and out of the house, without stopping to put on his hat. The friend, who pursued instantly, came up with him at the end of the street, and did all he could to soothe his agitation, but in vain. The same evening he was obliged to be put into a strait-waistcoat; and though in a few days he exhibited such symptoms of recovery that he was allowed to go by himself to pay a visit in the North of England, he there soon relapsed, and continued ever afterwards a hopeless lunatic, being supported to the end of his life, in June 1818, at Scott's expense, in an asylum at York.

On the first of July 1814, the Swift, nineteen volumes 8vo, at length issued from the press. This adventure, undertaken by Constable in 1808, had been proceeded in during all the variety of their personal relations, and now came forth when author and publisher felt more warmly towards each other than perhaps they had ever before done. The impression was of 1250 copies; and a reprint of similar extent was called for in 1824. Scott added to his edition many admirable pieces, both in prose and verse, which had never before been printed, and still more, which had escaped notice amidst old bundles of pamphlets and broadsides. To the illustration of these and of all the better known writings of the Dean, he brought the same qualifications which had, by general consent, distinguished his Dryden: "uniting," as the Edinburgh Review expresses it, "to the minute knowledge and patient research of the Malones and Chalmerses, a vigour of judgment and a vivacity of style to which they had no pretensions." His biographical narrative, introductory essays, and notes show, indeed, an intimacy of acquaintance with the obscurest details of the political, social, and literary history of the period of Queen Anne, which it is impossible to consider without

feeling a lively regret that he never accomplished a long-cherished purpose of editing Pope. It has been specially unfortunate for that "true deacon of the craft," as Scott often called him, that first Goldsmith, and then Scott, should have taken up, only to abandon it, the project of writing his life and annotating his works.

The Edinburgh Reviewer thus characterises the Memoir of the Dean of St Patrick's:—

"It is not much like the production of a mere man of letters, or a fastidious speculator in sentiment and morality; but exhibits throughout, and in a very pleasing form, the good sense and large toleration of a man of the world, with much of that generous allowance for the

'Fears of the brave and follies of the wise,'

which genius too often requires, and should therefore always be most forward to show. It is impossible, however, to avoid noticing that Mr Scott is by far too favourable to the personal character of his author, whom we think it would really be injurious to the cause of morality to allow to pass either as a very dignified, or a very amiable person. The truth is, we think, that he was extremely ambitious, arrogant, and selfish; of a morose, vindictive, and haughty temper; and though capable of a sort of patronising generosity towards his dependents, and of some attachment towards those who had long known and flattered him, his general demeanour, both in public and private life, appears to have been far from exemplary; destitute of temper and magnanimity, and we will add, of principle, in the former; and in the latter, of tenderness, fidelity, or compassion."—Vol. xvii. p. 9.

I have no desire to break a lance in this place in defence of Swift. It does not appear to me that he stands at all distinguished among politicians (least of all, among the politicians of his time) for laxity of principle; nor can I consent to charge his private demeanour with the absence either of tenderness, or fidelity, or compassion. But who ever dreamed—most assuredly not Scott—of holding up the Dean of St Patrick's as on the whole an "exemplary character?" The bio-

grapher felt, whatever his critic may have thought on the subject, that a vein of morbid humour ran through Swift's whole existence, both mental and physical, from the beginning. "He early adopted," says Scott, "the custom of observing his birthday as a term not of joy but of sorrow, and of reading, when it recurred, the striking passage of Scripture in which Job laments and execrates the day upon which it was said in his father's house *that a man-child was born;*" and I should have expected that any man who had considered the black close of the career thus early clouded, and read the entry of Swift's diary on the funeral of Stella, his epitaph on himself, and the testament by which he disposed of his fortune, would have been willing, like Scott, to dwell on the splendour of his immortal genius, and the many traits of manly generosity "which he unquestionably exhibited," rather than on the faults and foibles of nameless and inscrutable disease, which tormented and embittered the far greater part of his earthly being. What the critic says of the practical and business-like style of Scott's biography, appears very just—and I think the circumstance eminently characteristic; nor, on the whole, could his edition, as an edition, have been better dealt with than in the Essay which I have quoted. It was by the way, written by Mr Jeffrey at Constable's particular request. "It was, I think, the first time I ever asked such a thing of him," the bookseller said to me; "and I assure you the result was no encouragement to repeat such petitions." Mr Jeffrey attacked Swift's whole character at great length, and with consummate dexterity; and, in Constable's opinion, his article threw such a cloud on the Dean as materially checked for a time the popularity of his writings. Admirable as the paper is in point of ability, I think Mr Constable may have considerably exaggerated its effects; but in those days it must have been difficult for him to form an impartial opinion upon such a question; for, as Johnson said of Cave that "he could not spit over

his window without thinking of The Gentleman's Magazine," I believe Constable allowed nothing to interrupt his paternal pride in the concerns of his Review, until Waverley opened another periodical publication still more important to his fortunes.

And this consummation was not long delayed. Before Christmas Erskine had perused the greater part of the first volume, and expressed his decided opinion that Waverley would prove the most popular of all his friend's writings. The MS. was forthwith copied by John Ballantyne, and sent to press. As soon as a volume was printed, Ballantyne conveyed it to Constable, who did not for a moment doubt from what pen it proceeded, but took a few days to consider of the matter, and then offered L.700 for the copyright. When we recollect what the state of novel literature in those days was, and that the only exceptions to its mediocrity, the Irish Tales of Miss Edgeworth, however appreciated in refined circles, had a circulation so limited that she had never realized a tithe of L.700 by the best of them—it must be allowed that Constable's offer was a liberal one. Scott's answer, however, was, that L.700 was too much in case the novel should not be successful, and too little if it should. He added, "If our fat friend had said L.1000, I should have been staggered." John did not forget to convey this last hint to Constable, but the latter did not choose to act upon it; and ultimately agreed to an equal division of profits between himself and the author.

There was a considerable pause between the finishing of the first volume and the beginning of the second. Constable, eager about an extensive *Supplement* to his Encyclopædia Britannica, earnestly requested Scott to undertake a few articles; and, anxious to gratify the generous bookseller, he laid aside his tale until he had finished two essays—those on Chivalry and the Drama. They were written in the

course of April and May, and he received for each of them L.100.

A letter of the 9th July to Mr Morritt gives in more exact detail than the author's own recollection could supply in 1830, the history of the completion of Waverley: which had then been two days published. "I must now" (he says) "account for my own laziness, by referring you to a small anonymous sort of a novel, which you will receive by the mail of this day. It was a very old attempt of mine to embody some traits of those characters and manners peculiar to Scotland, the last remnants of which vanished during my own youth. I had written great part of the first volume, and sketched other passages, when I mislaid the MS., and only found it by the merest accident as I was rummaging the drawers of an old cabinet; and I took the fancy of finishing it. It has made a very strong impression here, and the good people of Edinburgh are busied in tracing the author, and in finding out originals for the portraits it contains. Jeffrey has offered to make oath that it is mine, and another great critic has tendered his affidavit *ex contrario;* so that these authorities have divided the Gude Town. Let me know your opinion about it. The truth is that this sort of muddling work amuses me, and I am something in the condition of Joseph Surface, who was embarrassed by getting himself too good a reputation; for many things may please people well enough anonymously, which if they have me in the title-page, would just give me that sort of ill name which precedes hanging—and that would be in many respects inconvenient, if I thought of again trying a *grande opus.*"

Morritt, as yet the only English confidant, conveyed on volume by volume as he read them his honest criticism: at last vehemently protesting against the maintenance of the incognito. Scott in his reply (July 24th) says:—"I shall *not* own Waverley; my chief reason is, that it would

prevent me the pleasure of writing again. David Hume, nephew of the historian, says the author must be of a Jacobite family and predilections, a yeoman-cavalry man, and a Scottish lawyer, and desires me to guess in whom these happy attributes are united. I shall not plead guilty, however; and as such seems to be the fashion of the day, I hope charitable people will believe my *affidavit* in contradiction to all other evidence. The Edinburgh faith now is, that Waverley is written by Jeffrey, having been composed to lighten the tedium of his late transatlantic voyage. So you see the unknown infant is like to come to preferment. In truth, I am not sure it would be considered quite decorous for me, as a Clerk of Session, to write novels. Judges being monks, Clerks are a sort of lay brethren, from whom some solemnity of walk and conduct may be expected. So whatever I may do of this kind, 'I shall whistle it down the wind, and let it prey at fortune.'[1] The second edition is, I believe, nearly through the press. It will hardly be printed faster than it was written; for though the first volume was begun long ago, and actually lost for a time, yet the other two were begun and finished between the 4th June and the first July, during all which I attended my duty in Court, and proceeded without loss of time or hinderance of business."

This statement as to the time occupied by the second and third volumes of Waverley, recalls to my memory a trifling anecdote, which, as connected with a dear friend of my youth, whom I have not seen for many years, and may very probably never see again in this world, I shall here set down, in the hope of affording him a momentary, though not an unmixed pleasure, when he may chance to read this compilation on a distant shore—and also in the hope that my humble record may impart to some active mind in the rising generation a shadow of the

[1] *Othello*, Act III. Scene 3.

influence which the reality certainly exerted upon his. Happening to pass through Edinburgh in June 1814, I dined one day with the gentleman in question (now the Honourable William Menzies, one of the Supreme Judges at the Cape of Good Hope), whose residence was then in George Street, situated very near to, and at right angles with, North Castle Street. It was a party of very young persons, most of them, like Menzies and myself, destined for the Bar of Scotland, all gay and thoughtless, enjoying the first flush of manhood, with little remembrance of the yesterday, or care of the morrow. When my companion's worthy father and uncle, after seeing two or three bottles go round, left the juveniles to themselves, the weather being hot, we adjourned to a library which had one large window looking northwards. After carousing here for an hour or more, I observed that a shade had come over the aspect of my friend, who happened to be placed immediately opposite to myself, and said something that intimated a fear of his being unwell. "No," said he, "I shall be well enough presently, if you will only let me sit where you are, and take my chair; for there is a confounded hand in sight of me here, which has often bothered me before, and now it won't let me fill my glass with a good will." I rose to change places with him accordingly, and he pointed out to me this hand which, like the writing on Belshazzar's wall, disturbed his hour of hilarity. "Since we sat down," he said, "I have been watching it—it fascinates my eye—it never stops—page after page is finished and thrown on that heap of MS. and still it goes on unwearied—and so it will be till candles are brought in, and God knows how long after that. It is the same every night—I can't stand a sight of it when I am not at my books."—"Some stupid, dogged, engrossing clerk, probably," exclaimed myself, or some other giddy youth in our society. "No, boys," said our host, "I well know

what hand it is—'tis Walter Scott's." This was the hand that, in the evenings of three summer weeks, wrote the two last volumes of Waverley.

The gallant composure with which Scott, when he had dismissed a work from his desk, awaited the decision of the public—and the healthy elasticity of spirit with which he could meanwhile turn his whole zeal upon new or different objects—are among the features in his character which will always, I believe, strike the student of literary history as most remarkable. It would be difficult to exaggerate the importance to his fortunes of this his first novel. Yet before he had heard of its reception in the south, except the whisper of one partial friend, he started on a voyage which was likely to occupy two months, and during which he could hardly expect to receive any letters.

He had been invited to accompany the Commissioners of the Northern Light Houses in their annual expedition; and as its programme included the Hebrides, and he had already made some progress in the Lord of the Isles, the opportunity for refreshing and enlarging his acquaintance with that region would alone have been a strong temptation. But there were many others. The trip was also to embrace the isles of Shetland and Orkney, and a vast extent of the mainland coasts, no part of which he had ever seen—or but for such an offer might ever have much chance of seeing. The Commissioners were all familiar friends of his—William Erskine, then Sheriff of the Orkneys, Robert Hamilton, Sheriff of Lanarkshire, Adam Duff, Sheriff of Forfarshire; but the real chief was the Surveyor-General, the celebrated engineer Mr Stevenson, and Scott anticipated special pleasure in his society. "I delight," he told Morritt, "in these professional men of talent. They always give you some new lights by the peculiarity of their habits and studies—so different from the people who are rounded and smoothed and ground down for conversation, and who can say all that every other person says—and no more."

To this voyage we owe many of the most striking passages in the Lord of the Isles, and the noble romance of the Pirate wholly. The leisure of the yacht allowed him to keep a very minute diary, from which he gave sundry extracts in his notes to both these works, and which may now be read entire in the larger memoirs of his life and correspondence. It abounds in interest—in sketches of scenery which could have come from his hand alone—in most curious details of insular manners: but its chief value is in its artless portraiture of the penman. I question if any man ever drew his own character more fully or more pleasingly. We have before us, according to the scene and occasion, the poet, the antiquary, the magistrate, the planter, and the agriculturist; but every where the warm yet sagacious philanthropist—every where the courtesy, based on the unselfishness, of the thoroughbred gentleman. It concludes with these words:—"But I must not omit to say, that among five or six persons, some of whom were doubtless different in tastes and pursuits, there did not occur, during the close communication of more than six weeks aboard a small vessel, the slightest difference of opinion. Each seemed anxious to submit his own wishes to those of his friends. The consequence was, that by judicious arrangement all were gratified in their turn, and frequently he who made some sacrifices to the views of his companions, was rewarded by some unexpected gratification calculated particularly for his own amusement. We had constant exertion, a succession of wild and uncommon scenery, good humour on board, and objects of animation and interest when we went ashore:—*Sed fugit interea—fugit irrevocabile tempus.*"

I have been told by one of the companions of this voyage, that heartily as he entered throughout into their social enjoyments, they all perceived him, when inspecting for the first time scenes of remarkable grandeur, to be in such an abstracted and excited mood, that they felt it

would be the kindest and discreetest plan to leave him to himself. "I often," said Lord Kinnedder, "on coming up from the cabin at night, found him pacing the deck rapidly, muttering to himself—and went to the forecastle, lest my presence should disturb him. I remember, that at Loch Corriskin, in particular, he seemed quite overwhelmed with his feelings; and we all saw it, and retiring unnoticed, left him to roam and gaze about by himself, until it was time to muster the party and be gone." Scott used to mention the surprise with which he himself witnessed Erskine's emotion on first entering the Cave of Staffa. "Would you believe it?" he said—"my poor Willie sat down and wept like a woman!" Yet his own sensibilities, though betrayed in a more masculine and sterner guise, were perhaps as keen as well as deeper than his amiable friend's.

A few days before his voyage ended, he heard casually of the death of Harriet, Duchess of Buccleuch, who ever since the days of Lasswade had been his most kind friend. The sad intelligence was confirmed on his arrival in the Clyde, by a most touching and manly letter from the Duke. Its closing paragraph has these sentences:—"Endeavouring to the last to conceal her suffering, she evinced a fortitude, a resignation, a Christian courage, beyond all power of description. Her last injunction was to attend to her poor people. I have learned that the most truly heroic spirit may be lodged in the tenderest and the gentlest breast. If ever there was a proof of the efficacy of our religion in moments of the deepest affliction, and in the hour of death, it was exemplified in her conduct. I will endeavour to do in all things what I know she would wish. I have therefore determined to lay myself open to all the comforts my friends can afford me. I shall be most happy to cultivate their society as heretofore. I shall love them more and more because I know they loved her. Whenever it suits your convenience I shall be happy

to see you here. I feel that it is particularly my duty not to make my house the house of mourning to my children; for I know it was *her* decided opinion that it is most mischievous to give an early impression of gloom to the mind."

The Duke survived for some years, and he continued in the line of conduct which he had from the first resolved upon; but he never recovered the blow: and this no one perceived more clearly than Scott.

In his letter to Morritt on reaching Edinburgh, he says (September 14th),—" We sailed from Leith, and skirted the Scottish coast, visiting the Buller of Buchan and other remarkable objects—went to Shetland—thence to Orkney—from thence round Cape Wrath to the Hebrides, making descents everywhere, where there was anything to be seen—thence to Lewis and the Long Island—to Skye—to Iona—and so forth, lingering among the Hebrides as long as we could. Then we stood over to the coast of Ireland, and visited the Giant's Causeway and Port Rush, where Dr Richardson, the inventor (discoverer, I would say,) of the celebrated fiorin grass, resides. By the way, he is a chattering charlatan, and his fiorin a mere humbug. But if he were Cicero, and his invention were potatoes, or anything equally useful, I should detest the recollection of the place and the man, for it was there I learned the death of my friend. Adieu, my dear Morritt; like poor Tom, 'I cannot daub it farther.'"

As he passed through Edinburgh, the negotiation as to the Lord of the Isles, which had been protracted through several months, was completed: Constable agreeing to give fifteen hundred guineas for one-half of the copyright, while the other moiety was retained by the author. The same sum had been offered at an early stage of the affair, but it was not until now accepted, in consequence of the earnest wish of Messrs Ballantyne to saddle the publisher of the new poem with another pyramid of their old "quire stock,"—which, however, Constable ultimately persisted

in refusing. It may easily be believed that John's management during a six weeks' absence had been such as to render it doubly convenient for the Poet to have this matter settled; and it may also be supposed that the progress of Waverley during that interval had tended to put the chief parties in good humour with each other. For nothing can be more unfounded than the statement repeated in various memoirs of Scott's life, that the sale of the first edition of this immortal Tale was slow. It appeared on the 7th of July, and the whole impression (1000 copies) had disappeared within five weeks; an occurrence then unprecedented in the case of an anonymous novel, put forth at what is called among publishers *the dead season.* A second edition of 2000 copies was at least projected by the 24th of the same month:—that appeared before the end of August, and it too had gone off so rapidly that Scott now, in September, found Constable eager to treat, on the same terms as before, for a third of 1000 copies. This third edition was published in October; and when a fourth of the like extent was called for in November, I find Scott writing to John Ballantyne:—"I suppose Constable won't quarrel with a work on which he has netted L.612 in four months, with a certainty of making it L.1000 before the year is out." It would be idle to enumerate subsequent reprints. Well might Constable regret that he had not ventured to offer L.1000 for the whole copyright of Waverley!

The only private friends originally intrusted with his secret appear to have been Erskine and Morritt. But there was one with whom it would, of course, have been more than vain to affect any concealment. On the publication of the third edition, I find him writing thus to his brother, then in Canada:—"Dear Tom, a novel here, called Waverley, has had enormous success. I sent you a copy, and will send you another with the Lord of the Isles which

will be out at Christmas. The success which it has had, with some other circumstances, has induced people

> 'To lay the bantling at a certain door,
> Where lying store of faults, they'd fain heap more.'[1]

You will guess for yourself how far such a report has credibility; but by no means give the weight of your opinion to the Transatlantic public; for you must know there is also a counter-report, that *you* have written the said Waverley. Send me a novel intermixing your exuberant and natural humour, with any incidents and descriptions of scenery you may see—particularly with characters and traits of manners. I will give it all the cobbling that is necessary, and, if you do but exert yourself, I have not the least doubt it will be worth L.500; and, to encourage you, you may, when you send the MS., draw on me for L.100, at fifty days' sight—so that your labours will at any rate not be quite thrown away. You have more fun and descriptive talent than most people; and all that you want—*i. e.* the mere practice of composition—I can supply, or the devil's in it. Keep this matter a dead secret, and look knowing when Waverley is spoken of. If you are not Sir John Falstaff, you are as good a man as he, and may therefore face Colville of the Dale. You may believe I don't want to make you the author of a book you have never seen; but if people will, upon their own judgment, suppose so, and also on their own judgment give you L.500 to try your hand on a novel, I don't see that you are a pin's-point the worse. Mind that your MS. attends the draft. I am perfectly serious and confident, that in two or three months you might clear the cobs. I beg my compliments to the hero who is afraid of Jeffrey's scalping-knife."

In truth, no one of Scott's intimate friends ever had, or could have had, the slightest doubt as to the parentage of Waverley: nor, although he abstained from communicating

[1] Garrick's Epilogue to *Polly Honeycombe*, 1760.

the fact formally to most of them, did he ever affect any real concealment in the case of such persons; nor, when any circumstance arose which rendered the withholding of direct confidence on the subject incompatible with perfect freedom of feeling on both sides, did he hesitate to make the avowal. Nor do I believe that the mystification ever answered much purpose among literary men of eminence beyond the circle of his personal acquaintance. But it would be difficult to suppose that he had ever wished that to be otherwise; it was sufficient for him to set the mob of readers at gaze, and above all, to escape the annoyance of having productions, actually known to be his, made the daily and hourly topics of discussion in his presence—especially (perhaps) productions in a new walk, to which it might be naturally supposed that Lord Byron's poetical successes had diverted him.

Mr Jeffrey had known Scott from his youth—and in reviewing Waverley he was at no pains to conceal his conviction of its authorship. He quarrelled as usual with carelessness of style and some inartificialities of plot, but rendered justice to the substantial merits of the work. The Quarterly was far less favourable. Indeed the articles on Waverley and Guy Mannering in that journal will bear the test of ultimate opinion as badly as any critical pieces which our time has produced. They are written in a captious, cavilling strain of quibble, which shews as complete blindness to the essential interest of the narrative, as the critic betrays on the subject of the Scottish dialogue, which forms its liveliest ornament, when he pronounces that to be "a dark dialect of Anglified Erse." With this remarkable exception, the censors of any note were not slow to confess their belief that, under a hackneyed name and trivial form, there had appeared a work of original creative genius, worthy of being placed by the side of the very few real masterpieces of prose fiction. Loftier romance was never blended with easier, quainter humour, by Cervantes. In

his familiar delineations he had combined the strength of Smollett with the native elegance and unaffected pathos of Goldsmith; in his darker scenes he had revived that real tragedy which appeared to have left our theatre with the age of Shakspeare; and elements of interest so diverse had been blended and interwoven with that nameless grace, which, more surely perhaps than even the highest perfection in the command of any one strain of sentiment, marks the master-mind cast in Nature's most felicitous mould.

CHAPTER VIII.

Publication of the Lord of the Isles and Guy Mannering—Meeting with Byron—Carlton House dinner—Excursion to Paris—Publication of the Field of Waterloo—Paul's Letters—The Antiquary—Harold the Dauntless—and the first Tales of my Landlord.—1815–1816.

THE voyage and these good news sent him back in high vigour to his desk at Abbotsford. For lighter work he had on hand *the Memorie of the Somervilles*, a very curious specimen of family history, which he had undertaken to edit at the request of his neighbour Lord Somerville. This was published in October. His serious labour was on the Lord of the Isles: of which only three cantos had been written when he concluded his bargain with Constable. He had carried with him in the Yacht some proof-sheets of a little book that Ballantyne was printing, entitled *Poems illustrative of Traditions in Galloway and Ayrshire, by Joseph Train, Supervisor of Excise at Castle-Stewart:* and, being struck with the notes, wrote, on his arrival at home, to the author, whom he had never seen, requesting information concerning the ruins of Turnberry, on the Ayrshire coast, of which he wished to say something in connection with one of Bruce's adventures in the forthcoming poem. Mr Train did much more than Scott had meant to ask;—for he had never himself been at Turnberry—but instantly rode over the hills to the spot, and transmitted ample details of the castle and all its legends:—not omitting a local superstition, that on the anniversary of the night when Bruce landed there from Arran, the meteoric gleam which had attended his voyage re-appeared unfailingly in the same quarter of the heavens. What use Scott made

of this and other parts of Mr Train's paper, we see from the fifth canto of the Lord of the Isles and its notes: and the date of the communication (November 2) is therefore important as to the history of the composition; but this was the beginning of a correspondence which had many other happy consequences. From this time the worthy supervisor, who had had many literary plans and schemes, dropt all notion of authorship in his own person, and devoted his leisure with most generous assiduity to the collection of whatever stories he fancied likely to be of use to his new acquaintance, who, after one or two meetings, had impressed him with unbounded enthusiasm of attachment. To no one individual did Scott owe so much of the materials of his novels: and one of the very earliest packets from Castle-Stewart (November 7) contained a ballad called *The Durham Garland*, which, reviving Scott's recollection of a story told in his youth by a servant of his father's, suggested the groundwork of the second of the series. James Ballantyne, in writing by desire of "the Author of Waverley" to Miss Edgeworth, with a copy of the fourth edition of that novel (November 11), mentioned that another might soon be expected; but, as he added, that it would treat of manners more ancient than those of 1745, it is clear that no outline resembling that of *Guy Mannering* was then in the printer's view: most probably Scott had signified to him that he designed to handle the period of the Covenanters. There can, I think, be as little doubt that he began Guy Mannering as soon as Train's paper of the 7th November reached him.

He writes, on the 25th December, to Constable that he "had corrected the last proofs of the Lord of the Isles, and was setting out for Abbotsford to refresh the machine." And in what did his refreshment of the machine consist? The poem was published on the 15th January; and he says, *on that day*, to Morritt, "I want to shake myself free of Waverley, and accordingly have made a considerable exer-

tion to finish an odd little tale within such time as will mystify the public, I trust—unless they suppose me to be Briareus. Two volumes are already printed, and the only persons in my confidence, W. Erskine and Ballantyne, are of opinion that it is much more interesting than Waverley. It is a tale of private life, and only varied by the perilous exploits of smugglers and excisemen." Guy Mannering was published on the 24th of February—that is, exactly two months after the Lord of the Isles was dismissed from the author's desk; and—making but a narrow allowance for the operations of the transcriber, printer, bookseller, &c., I think the dates I have gathered together confirm the accuracy of what I have often heard Scott say, that his second novel "was the work of six weeks at a Christmas." Such was his recipe "for refreshing the machine."

I am sorry to have to add, that this severity of labour, like the repetition of it which had deplorable effects at a later period, was the result of difficulties about the discount of John Ballantyne's bills.

Finding that Constable would not meet his views as to some of these matters, Mr John suggested to Scott that some other house might prove more accommodating if he were permitted to offer them not only the new novel, but the next edition of the established favourite Waverley: but upon this ingenious proposition Scott at once set his *veto*. "Dear John," he writes, "your expedients are all wretched, as far as regards me. I never will give Constable, or any one, room to say I have broken my word with him in the slightest degree. If I lose every thing else, I will at least keep my honour unblemished; and I do hold myself bound in honour to offer him a Waverley, while he shall continue to comply with the conditions annexed." The result was, that Messrs Longman undertook the Guy Mannering, relieving John of some of his encumbering stock; but Longman, in compliance with Scott's wish, admitted Constable to a share in the adventure;

and with one or two exceptions, originating in circumstances nearly similar, the house of Constable published all the subsequent novels.

I must not, however, forget that *The Lord of the Isles* was published a month before *Guy Mannering*. The poem was received with an interest much heightened by the recent and growing success of the mysterious Waverley. Its appearance, so rapidly following that novel, and accompanied with the announcement of another prose tale, just about to be published, by the same hand, puzzled and confounded the mob of dulness. The more sagacious few said to themselves—Scott is making one serious effort more in his old line, and by this it will be determined whether he does or does not altogether renounce that for his new one.

The most important remarks of the principal Reviewers on the details of the plot and execution are annexed to the last edition of the poem; and show such an exact coincidence of judgment in two masters of their calling, as had not hitherto been exemplified in the professional criticism of his metrical romances. The defects which both point out, are, I presume, but too completely explained by the preceding statement of the rapidity with which this, the last of those great performances, had been thrown off; nor do I see that either Reviewer has failed to do sufficient justice to the beauties which redeem the imperfections of the Lord of the Isles—except as regards the whole character of Bruce, its real hero, and the picture of the Battle of Bannockburn, which, now that one can compare these works from something like the same point of view, does not appear to me in the slightest particular inferior to the Flodden of Marmion.

This poem is now, I believe, about as popular as Rokeby; but it has never reached the same station in general favour with the Lay, Marmion, or the Lady of the Lake. The instant consumption of 1800 quartos, followed by 8vo reprints to the number of 12,000, would, in the case of

almost any other author, have been splendid success; but as compared with what he had previously experienced, even in his Rokeby, and still more so as compared with the enormous circulation at once attained by Lord Byron's early tales, which were then following each other in almost breathless succession, the falling off was decided. One evening, some days after the poem had been published, Scott requested James Ballantyne to call on him, and the Printer found him alone in his library, working at the third volume of Guy Mannering.—'Well, James,' he said, 'I have given you a week—what are people saying about the Lord of the Isles?'—"I hesitated a little," says the Printer, "after the fashion of Gil Blas, but he speedily brought the matter to a point—'Come,' he said, 'speak out, my good fellow; what has put it into your head to be on so much ceremony *with me* all of a sudden? But, I see how it is, the result is given in one word—*Disappointment.*' My silence admitted his inference to the fullest extent. His countenance certainly did look rather blank for a few seconds; in truth, he had been wholly unprepared for the event; for it is a singular fact, that before the public, or rather the booksellers, had given their decision, he no more knew whether he had written well or ill, than whether a die thrown out of a box was to turn up a size or an ace. However, he instantly resumed his spirit, and expressed his wonder rather that his poetical popularity should have lasted so long, than that it should have now at last given way. At length he said, with perfect cheerfulness, 'Well, well, James, so be it—but you know we must not droop, for we can't afford to give over. Since one line has failed, we must just stick to something else:'—and so he dismissed me, and resumed this novel....He spoke thus, probably, unaware of the undiscovered wonders then slumbering in his mind. Yet still he could not but have felt that the production of a few poems was nothing in comparison of what must be in reserve for him, for he was at this time

scarcely more than forty. An evening or two after, I called again on him, and found on the table a copy of the Giaour, which he seemed to have been reading. Having an enthusiastic young lady in my house, I asked him if I might carry the book home with me, but chancing to glance on the autograph blazon, '*To the Monarch of Parnassus from one of his subjects*,' instantly retracted my request, and said I had not observed Lord Byron's inscription before. 'What inscription?' said he; 'O yes, I had forgot, but inscription or no inscription, you are equally welcome." I again took it up, and he continued—'James, Byron hits the mark where I don't even pretend to fledge my arrow.' At this time he had never seen Byron, but I knew he meant soon to be in London, when, no doubt, the mighty consummation of the meeting of the two bards would be accomplished—and I ventured to say that he must be looking forward to it with some interest. His countenance became fixed, and he answered impressively, 'O, of course.' In a minute or two afterwards he rose from his chair, paced the room at a very rapid rate, which was his practice in certain moods of mind, then made a dead halt, and bursting into an extravaganza of laughter, 'James,' cried he, 'I'll tell you what Byron should say to me when we are about to accost each other—

Art thou the man whom men famed Grizzle call?

And then how germane would be my answer—

Art thou the still more famed Tom Thumb the small?'

This, concludes Mr B. kept him full of mirth for the rest of the evening."

The whole scene is delightfully characteristic: and not more of Scott than of his printer; for Ballantyne, with all his profound worship of his benefactor, was an undoubting acquiescer in "the decision of the public, or rather of the booksellers;" and among the many absurdities into which his reverence for the popedom of Paternoster-Row led him, I never could but consider with special astonishment,

the facility with which he seemed to have adopted the notion that the Byron of 1814 was really entitled to supplant Scott as a popular poet. Appreciating, as no man of his talents could fail to do, the original glow and depth of Childe Harold, he always appeared quite blind to the fact that in the Giaour, the Bride of Abydos, Parisina, and indeed, in all his early narratives, Byron owed at least half his success to imitation of Scott, and no trivial share of the rest to the lavish use of materials which Scott never employed, only because his genius was under the guidance of high feelings of moral rectitude. All this Lord Byron himself seems to have felt most completely: witness his letters and diaries; and I think I see many symptoms that both the decision of the million, and its index, "the decision of the booksellers," tend the same way at present.

If January brought "disappointment," there was abundant consolation in store for February 1815. Guy Mannering was received with eager curiosity, and pronounced by acclamation fully worthy to share the honours of Waverley. The easy transparent flow of its style; the beautiful simplicity, and here and there the wild solemn magnificence of its sketches of scenery; the rapid, ever heightening interest of the narrative; the unaffected kindliness of feeling, the manly purity of thought, everywhere mingled with a gentle humour and a homely sagacity; but, above all, the rich variety and skilful contrast of characters and manners at once fresh in fiction, and stamped with the unforgeable seal of truth and nature; these were charms that spoke to every heart and mind; and the few murmurs of pedantic criticism were lost in the voice of general delight, which never fails to welcome the invention that introduces to the sympathy of imagination a new group of immortal realities.

The first edition was, like that of Waverley, in three little volumes, with a humility of paper and printing which the meanest novelist would now disdain to imitate; the

price a guinea. The 2000 copies of which it consisted were sold the day after the publication; and within three months came a second and a third impression, making together 5000 copies more. Of the subsequent vogue it is needless to speak.

On the rising of the Court of Session in March, Scott went by sea to London with his wife and their eldest girl. Six years had elapsed since he last appeared in the metropolis; and brilliant as his reception had then been, it was still more so on the present occasion. Scotland had been visited in the interim, chiefly from the interest excited by his writings, by crowds of the English nobility, most of whom had found introduction to his personal acquaintance —not a few had partaken of his hospitality at Ashestiel or Abbotsford. The generation among whom, I presume, a genius of this order feels his own influence with the proudest and sweetest confidence—on whose fresh minds and ears he has himself made the first indelible impressions—the generation with whose earliest romance of the heart and fancy his idea had been blended, was now grown to the full stature; the success of these recent novels, seen on every table, the subject of every conversation, had, with those who did not doubt their parentage, far more than counter-weighed his declination, dubious after all, in the poetical balance; while the mystery that hung over them quickened the curiosity of the hesitating and conjecturing many—and the name on which ever and anon some new circumstance accumulated stronger suspicion, loomed larger through the haze in which he had thought fit to envelope it. Moreover, this was a period of high national pride and excitement. At such a time, Prince and people were well prepared to hail him who, more perhaps than any other master of the pen, had contributed to sustain the spirit of England throughout the struggle, which was as yet supposed to have been terminated on the field of Toulouse. "Thank Heaven you are coming at last"—Joanna Baillie had

written a month or two before—"Make up your mind to be stared at only a little less than the Czar of Muscovy or old Blücher."

And now took place James Ballantyne's "mighty consummation of the meeting of the two bards." "Report," says Scott to Moore, "had prepared me to meet a man of peculiar habits and a quick temper, and I had some doubts whether we were likely to suit each other in society. I was most agreeably disappointed in this respect. *I found* Lord Byron in the highest degree courteous, *and even kind.* We met for an hour or two almost daily, in Mr Murray's drawing-room, and found a great deal to say to each other. We also met frequently in parties and evening society, so that for about two months I had the advantage of a considerable intimacy with this distinguished individual. Our sentiments agreed a good deal, except upon the subjects of religion and politics, upon neither of which I was inclined to believe that Lord Byron entertained very fixed opinions. I remember saying to him, that I really thought that if he lived a few years he would alter his sentiments. He answered, rather sharply—'I suppose you are one of those who prophesy I shall turn Methodist.' I replied—'No; I don't expect your conversion to be of such an ordinary kind. I would rather look to see you retreat upon the Catholic faith, and distinguish yourself by the austerity of your penances.' He smiled gravely, and seemed to allow I might be right. On politics, he used sometimes to express a high strain of what is now called Liberalism; but it appeared to me that the pleasure it afforded him, as a vehicle for displaying his wit and satire against individuals in office, was at the bottom of this habit of thinking, rather than any real conviction of the political principles on which he talked. He was certainly proud of his rank and ancient family, and, in that respect, as much an aristocrat as was consistent with good sense and good breeding. Some disgusts, how adopted I know not, seemed to me to have

given this peculiar and (as it appeared to me) contradictory cast of mind; but, at heart, I would have termed Byron a patrician on principle. . . . . Lord Byron's reading did not seem to me to have been very extensive, either in poetry or history. Having the advantage of him in that respect, and possessing a good competent share of such reading as is little read, I was sometimes able to put under his eye objects which had for him the interest of novelty. I remember particularly repeating to him the fine poem of Hardyknute, an imitation of the old Scottish ballad, with which he was so much affected, that some one who was in the same apartment asked me what I could possibly have been telling Byron by which he was so much agitated. . . . . Like the old heroes in Homer, we exchanged gifts. I gave Byron a beautiful dagger mounted with gold, which had been the property of the redoubted Elfi Bey. But I was to play the part of Diomed in the Iliad, for Byron sent me, some time after, a large sepulchral vase of silver. It was full of dead men's bones, and had inscriptions on two sides of the base. One ran thus:—'The bones contained in this urn were found in certain ancient sepulchres within the long walls of Athens, in the month of February 1811.' The other face bears the lines of Juvenal—'*Expende—quot libras in duce summo invenies?—Mors sola fatetur quantula sint hominum corpuscula.*' To these I have added a third inscription, in these words—'The gift of Lord Byron to Walter Scott.' There was a letter with this vase, more valuable to me than the gift itself, from the kindness with which the donor expressed himself towards me. I left it naturally in the urn with the bones; but it is now missing. As the theft was not of a nature to be practised by a mere domestic, I am compelled to suspect the inhospitality of some individual of higher station, most gratuitously exercised certainly, since, after what I have here said, no one will probably choose to boast of possessing this literary curiosity. We had a good

deal of laughing, I remember, on what the public might be supposed to think, or say, concerning the gloomy and ominous nature of our mutual gifts. He was often melancholy—almost gloomy. When I observed him in this humour, I used either to wait till it went off of its own accord, or till some natural and easy mode occurred of leading him into conversation, when the shadows almost always left his countenance, like the mist rising from a landscape. In conversation, he was very animated. . . . . I think I also remarked in his temper starts of suspicion, when he seemed to pause and consider whether there had not been a secret, and perhaps offensive, meaning in something casually said to him. In this case I also judged it best to let his mind, like a troubled spring, work itself clear, which it did in a minute or two. I was considerably older, you will recollect, than my noble friend, and had no reason to fear his misconstruing my sentiments towards him, nor had I ever the slightest reason to doubt that they were kindly returned on his part. If I had occasion to be mortified by the display of genius which threw into the shade such pretensions as I was then supposed to possess, I might console myself that, in my own case, the materials of mental happiness had been mingled in a greater proportion. . . . . I have always continued to think that a crisis of life was arrived, in which a new career of fame was opened to him, and that had he been permitted to start upon it, he would have obliterated the memory of such parts of his life as friends would wish to forget."

It was also in the spring of 1815 that Scott had, for the first time, the honour of being presented to the Prince Regent. His Royal Highness, on reading his Edinburgh Address, had said to William Dundas, that "Walter Scott's charming behaviour about the laureateship made him doubly desirous of seeing him at Carlton House:" and there had been other messages from the Prince's librarian. On hearing from Mr Croker (then Secretary to the Admiralty)

that Scott was to be in town by the middle of March, the Prince said—"Let me know when he comes, and I'll get up a snug little dinner that will suit him;" and, after he had been presented and graciously received at the *levee*, he was invited to dinner accordingly, through his excellent friend Mr Adam (afterwards Lord Chief Commissioner of the Jury Court in Scotland),[1] who at that time held a confidential office in the royal household. The Regent had consulted with Mr Adam also as to the composition of the party. "Let us have," said he, "just a few friends of his own—and the more Scotch the better;" and both the Chief Commissioner and Mr Croker assure me that the party was the most interesting and agreeable one in their recollection. It comprised, I believe, the Duke of York—the late Duke of Gordon (then Marquess of Huntly)—the late Marquess of Hertford (then Lord Yarmouth)—the Earl of Fife—and Scott's early friend Lord Melville. "The Prince and Scott," says Mr Croker, "were the two most brilliant story-tellers in their several ways, that I have ever happened to meet; they were both aware of their *forte*, and both exerted themselves that evening with delightful effect. On going home, I really could not decide which of them had shone the most. The Regent was enchanted with Scott, as Scott with him; and on all his subsequent visits to London, he was a frequent guest at the royal table." The Lord Chief Commissioner remembers that the Prince was particularly delighted with the poet's anecdotes of the old Scotch judges and lawyers, which his Royal Highness sometimes *capped* by ludicrous traits of certain ermined sages

[1] This most amiable and venerable gentleman, my dear and kind friend, died at Edinburgh on the 17th February 1839, in the 89th year of his age. He retained his strong mental faculties in their perfect vigour to the last days of this long life, and with them the warmth of social feelings which had endeared him to all who were so happy as to have any opportunity of knowing him—to none more than Scott.

of his own acquaintance. Scott told, among others, a story, which he was fond of telling; and the commentary of his Royal Highness on hearing it amused Scott, who often mentioned it afterwards. The anecdote is this:—A certain Judge, whenever he went on a particular circuit, was in the habit of visiting a gentleman of good fortune in the neighbourhood of one of the assize towns, and staying at least one night, which, being both of them ardent chess-players, they usually concluded with their favourite game. One Spring circuit the battle was not decided at day-break, so the Judge said—"Weel, Donald, I must e'en come back this gate in the harvest, and let the game lie ower for the present;" and back he came in October, but not to his old friend's hospitable house; for that gentleman had in the interim been apprehended on a capital charge (of forgery,) and his name stood on the *Porteous Roll*, or list of those who were about to be tried under his former guest's auspices. The laird was indicted and tried accordingly, and the jury returned a verdict of *guilty*. The Judge forthwith put on his cocked hat (which answers to the black cap in England,) and pronounced the sentence of the law in the usual terms—"To be hanged by the neck until you be dead; and may the Lord have mercy upon your unhappy soul!" Having concluded this awful formula in his most sonorous cadence, the Judge, dismounting his formidable beaver, gave a familiar nod to his unfortunate acquaintance, and said to him in a sort of chuckling whisper—"And now, Donald, my man, I think I've checkmated you for ance." The Regent laughed heartily at this specimen of judicial humour: and "I'faith, Walter," said he, "this old big-wig seems to have taken things as coolly as my tyrannical self. Don't you remember Tom Moore's description of me at breakfast—

> 'The table spread with tea and toast,
> Death-warrants and the Morning Post?'"

Towards midnight, the Prince called for "a bumper,

with all the honours, to the Author of Waverley," and looked significantly, as he was charging his own glass, to Scott. Scott seemed somewhat puzzled for a moment, but instantly recovering himself, and filling his glass to the brim, said, "Your Royal Highness looks as if you thought I had some claim to the honours of this toast. I have no such pretensions, but shall take good care that the real Simon Pure hears of the high compliment that has now been paid him." He then drank off his claret, and joined in the cheering, which the Prince himself timed. But before the company could resume their seats, his Royal Highness exclaimed—"Another of the same, if you please, to the Author of Marmion—and now, Walter, my man, I've checkmated you for *ance*." The second bumper was followed by cheers still more prolonged: and Scott then rose and returned thanks in a short address, which struck the Lord Chief Commissioner as "alike grave and graceful." This story has been circulated in a very perverted shape. I now give it on the authority of my venerated friend.—He adds, that having occasion, the day after, to call on the Duke of York, his Royal Highness said to him —"Upon my word, Adam, my brother went rather too near the wind about Waverley—but nobody could have turned the thing more prettily than Walter Scott did—and upon the whole I never had better fun."[1]

The Regent, as was his custom with those he most delighted to honour, uniformly addressed the poet, even at their first dinner, by his Christian name, "Walter."

[1] Since this narrative was first published, I have been told by two gentlemen who were at this dinner, that, according to their recollection, the Prince *did not* on that occasion run "so near the wind" as my text represents: and I am inclined to believe that a subsequent scene may have been unconsciously blended with a gentler rehearsal. The Chief Commissioner had promised to revise my sheets for the second edition; but alas! he never did so—and I must now leave the matter as it stands.

Before he left town, he again dined at Carlton House, when the party was a still smaller one than before, and the merriment, if possible, still more free. That nothing might be wanting, the Prince sung several capital songs in the course of that evening—as witness the lines in *Sultan Serendib*—

> "I love a Prince will bid the bottle pass,
> Exchanging with his subjects glance and glass;
> In fitting time can, gayest of the gay,
> Keep up the jest and mingle in the lay.
> Such Monarchs best our freeborn humour suit,
> But despots must be stately, stern, and mute."

Before he returned to Edinburgh, on the 22d of May, the Regent sent him a gold snuff-box, set in brilliants, with a medallion of his Royal Highness's head on the lid, "as a testimony" (writes Mr Adam, in transmitting it) "of the high opinion his Royal Highness entertains of your genius and merit."

I transcribe what follows from James Ballantyne's *Memoranda*:—"After Mr Scott's first interview with his Sovereign, one or two intimate friends took the liberty of inquiring, what judgment he had formed of the Regent's talents? He declined giving any definite answer—but repeated, that 'he was the first gentleman he had seen—certainly the first *English* gentleman of his day;—there was something about him which, independently of the *prestige*, the 'divinity, which hedges a King,' marked him as standing entirely by himself: but as to his abilities, spoken of as distinct from his charming manners, how could any one form a fair judgment of that man who introduced whatever subject he chose, discussed it just as long as he chose, and dismissed it when he chose?'" Ballantyne adds—"What I have now to say is more important, not only in itself, but as it will enable you to give a final contradiction to an injurious report which has been in circulation; viz. that the Regent asked him as to the author-

ship of Waverley, and received a distinct and solemn denial. I took the bold freedom of requesting to know *from him* whether his Royal Highness had questioned him on that subject, and what had been his answer. He glanced at me with a look of wild surprise, and said—'What answer I might have made to such a question, put to me by my Sovereign, perhaps I do not, or rather perhaps I do know; but I was never put to the test. He is far too well-bred a man ever to put so ill-bred a question.'"

During his brief residence in London, Scott lost his dear friend George Ellis—which threw a heavy cloud over a bright sky. But the public events of the time must alone have been sufficient to keep him in a state of fervid excitement. Before his return to the north, Napoleon had been fully reinstated, and the allied forces were fast assembling in the Netherlands. His official duties compelled him to defer once more his old anxiety for "a peep at Wellington and his merry men," until the fate of Europe had been decided at Waterloo. But his friends were well aware of his resolution to visit the Continent as soon as the session was over; and he very kindly accepted the proposal of three young neighbours of Tweedside who were eager to make the excursion in his society.

With these gentlemen, Alexander Pringle of Whytbank (since M.P. for Selkirkshire), Robert Bruce (now Sheriff of Argyle), and his kinsman, the late accomplished John Scott of Gala, he left Edinburgh accordingly on the 27th of July. They travelled by the stage-coach, and took the route of Cambridge; for *Gala* and *Whytbank*, both members of that university, were desirous of showing its architecture to their friend. After this wish had been gratified, they proceeded to Harwich. "The weather was beautiful," says *Gala*, "so we all went outside the coach. At starting, there was a general complaint of thirst, the consequence of some experiments over-night on the celebrated *bishop* of my *Alma Mater;* our friend,

however, was in great glee, and never was a merrier *basket* than he made it all the morning. He had cautioned us, on leaving Edinburgh, never to *name names* in such situations, and our adherence to this rule was rewarded by some amusing incidents. For example, as we entered the town where we were to dine, a heavy-looking man, who was to stop there, took occasion to thank Scott for the pleasure his anecdotes afforded him: 'You have a good memory, sir,' said he: 'mayhap, now, you sometimes write down what you hear or be a-reading about?' He answered, very gravely, that he did occasionally put down a *few* notes, if anything struck him particularly. In the afternoon, it happened that he sat on the box, while the rest of us were behind him. Here, by degrees, he became absorbed in his own reflections. He frequently repeated to himself, or *composed* perhaps, for a good while, and often smiled or raised his hand, seeming completely occupied and amused. His neighbour, a vastly scientific and rather grave professor, in a smooth drab Benjamin and broad-brimmed beaver, cast many a curious sidelong glance at him, evidently suspecting that all was not right with the upper story, but preserved perfect politeness. The poet was, however, discovered by the captain of the vessel in which we crossed to Helvoestsleys; and a perilous passage it was, chiefly in consequence of the unceasing tumblers in which this worthy kept drinking his health."

Before Scott reached Harwich, he received Constable's acceptance of an offer to compose, during the journey, a series of sketches, which he undertook to have ready for publication "by the second week of September;" and thenceforth he threw his daily letters to his wife into the form of communications meant for an imaginary group, consisting of a spinster sister, a statistical laird, a rural clergyman of the Presbyterian Kirk, and a brother, a veteran officer on half-pay. The rank of this last personage corresponded, however, exactly with that of his own elder

brother, John Scott, who also, like the Major of the book, had served in the Duke of York's unfortunate campaign of 1797; the sister is only a slender disguise for his aunt Christian Rutherfurd, already often mentioned; Lord Somerville, long President of the Board of Agriculture, was Paul's laird; and the shrewd and unbigoted Dr Douglas of Galashiels was his "minister of the gospel." These epistles, after having been devoured by the little circle at Abbotsford, were transmitted to Major John Scott, his mother, and Miss Rutherfurd, in Edinburgh; from their hands they passed to those of James Ballantyne and Mr Erskine, both of whom assured me that the copy ultimately sent to the press consisted, in great part, of the identical sheets that had successively reached Melrose through the post. The rest had of course been, as Ballantyne expresses it, "somewhat cobbled;" but, on the whole, *Paul's Letters to his Kinsfolk* are to be considered as a true and faithful journal of this expedition. The kindest of husbands and fathers never portrayed himself with more unaffected truth than in this vain effort, if such he really fancied he was making, to sustain the character of "a cross old bachelor." The whole man, just as he was, breathes in every line, with all his compassionate and benevolent sympathy of heart, all his sharpness of observation, and sober shrewdness of reflection; all his enthusiasm for nature, for country life, for simple manners and simple pleasures, mixed up with an equally glowing enthusiasm, at which many may smile, for the tiniest relics of feudal antiquity—and last, not least, a pulse of physical rapture for the "circumstance of war," which bears witness to the blood of *Boltfoot* and *Fire-the-Braes*. I shall not trespass on the reader of that delightful record, except by a few particulars which I owe to the juniors of the party.

Paul modestly acknowledges in his last letter, the personal attentions which he received, while in Paris, from Lords Cathcart, Aberdeen, and Castlereagh; and hints

that, through their intervention, he had witnessed several of the splendid *fêtes* given by the Duke of Wellington, where he saw half the crowned heads of Europe grouped among the gallant soldiers who had cut a way for them to the guilty capital of France. Scott's reception, however, had been distinguished to a degree of which Paul's language gives no notion. The Noble Lords above named welcomed him with cordial satisfaction; and the Duke of Wellington, to whom he was first presented by Sir John Malcolm, treated him then, and ever afterwards, with a kindness and confidence, which, I have often heard him say, he considered as "the highest distinction of his life." He used to tell, with great effect, the circumstances of his introduction to the Emperor Alexander, at a dinner given by the Earl of Cathcart. Scott appeared, on that occasion, in the blue and red dress of the Selkirkshire Lieutenancy; and the Czar's first question, glancing at his lameness, was, "In what affair were you wounded?" Scott signified that he suffered from a natural infirmity; upon which the Emperor said, "I thought Lord Cathcart mentioned that you had served." Scott observed that the Earl looked a little embarrassed at this, and promptly answered, "O yes; in a certain sense I have served—that is, in the yeomanry cavalry; a home force resembling the Landwehr, or Landsturm."—"Under what commander?"—"Sous M. le Chevalier Rae."—"Were you ever engaged?"—"In some slight actions—such as the battle of the Cross Causeway and the affair of Moredun-Mill."—"This," says Mr Pringle of Whytbank, "was, as he saw in Lord Cathcart's face, quite sufficient, so he managed to turn the conversation to some other subject." It was at the same dinner that he first met Platoff,[1] who seemed to take a great fancy

[1] Scott acknowledges, in a note to St Ronan's Well (vol. i. p. 252), that he took from Platoff this portrait of Mr Touchwood:—"His face, which at the distance of a yard or two seemed hale and smooth, appeared, when closely examined, to be seamed with a

to him, though, adds my friend, "I really don't think they had any common language to converse in." Next day, however, when Pringle and Scott were walking together in the Rue de la Paix, the Hetman happened to come up, cantering with some of his Cossacks; as soon as he saw Scott, he jumped off his horse, leaving it to the Pulk, and, running up to him, kissed him on each side of the cheek with extraordinary demonstrations of affection—and then made him understand, through an aide-de-camp, that he wished him to join his staff at the next great review, when he would take care to mount him on the gentlest of his Ukraine horses.

It will seem less surprising that Scott should have been honoured with much attention by the leading soldiers and statesmen of Germany then in Paris. The fame of his poetry had already been established for some years in that country. Yet it may be doubted whether Blücher had heard of Marmion any more than Platoff; and old Blücher struck Scott's fellow-travellers as taking more interest in him than any foreign general, except only the Hetman.

A striking passage in Paul's tenth letter indicates the high notion which Scott had formed of the personal qualities of the Prince of Orange. After depicting, with almost prophetic accuracy, the dangers to which the then recent union of Holland and Belgium must be exposed, he concludes with expressing his hope that the firmness and sagacity of the King of the Netherlands, and the admiration which his heir's character and bearing had already excited among all, even Belgian observers, might ultimately prove effective in redeeming this difficult experiment from the usual failure of "*arron-*

million of wrinkles, crossing each other in every direction possible, but as fine as if drawn by the point of a very fine needle." Thus did every little peculiarity remain treasured in his memory, to be used in due time for giving the air of minute reality to some imaginary personage.

dissements, indemnities, and all the other terms of modern date, under sanction of which cities and districts, and even kingdoms, have been passed from one government to another, as the property of lands or stock is transferred by a bargain between private parties."

It is not less curious to compare, with the subsequent course of affairs in France, the following brief hint in Paul's 16th letter:—"The general rallying point of the *Liberalistes* is an avowed dislike to the present monarch and his immediate connexions. They will sacrifice, they pretend, so much to the general inclinations of Europe, as to select a king from the Bourbon race; but he must be one of their own choosing, and the Duke of Orleans is most familiar in their mouths." Thus, in its very bud, had his eye detected the *conjuration de quinze ans!*

As yet, the literary reputation of Scott had made but little way among the French nation; but some few of their eminent men vied even with the enthusiastic Germans in their courteous and unwearied attentions to him. The venerable *Chevalier*, in particular, seemed anxious to embrace every opportunity of acting as his cicerone; and many mornings were spent in exploring, under his guidance, the most remarkable scenes and objects of historical and antiquarian interest both in Paris and its neighbourhood. He several times also entertained Scott and his young companions at dinner; but the last of those dinners was thoroughly poisoned by a preliminary circumstance. The poet, on entering the saloon, was presented to a stranger, whose physiognomy struck him as the most hideous he had ever seen; nor was his disgust lessened, when he found, a few minutes afterwards, that he had undergone the *accollade* of David "of the blood-stained brush."

From Paris, Mr Bruce and Mr Pringle went on to Switzerland, leaving the Poet and Gala to return home together, which they did by way of Dieppe, Brighton, and London. It was here, on the 14th of September, that

Scott had his last meeting with Byron. He carried his young friend in the morning to call on Lord Byron, who agreed to dine with them at their hotel, where he met also Charles Mathews and Daniel Terry. Gala has recorded it in his note-book as the most interesting day he ever spent. "How I did stare," he says, "at Byron's beautiful pale face, like a spirit's—good or evil. But he was *bitter*—what a contrast to Scott! Among other anecdotes of British prowess and spirit, Scott mentioned that a young gentleman ——— ——— ——— had been awfully shot in the head while conveying an order from the Duke, and yet staggered on, and delivered his message when at the point of death. 'Ha!' said Byron, 'I daresay he could do as well as most people without his head—it was never of much use to him.' Waterloo did not delight him, probably—and Scott could talk or think of scarcely anything else."

Mathews accompanied them as far as Warwick and Kenilworth, both of which castles the poet had seen before, but now re-examined with particular curiosity. They spent a night at Sheffield; and early next morning Scott sallied forth to provide himself with a planter's knife of the most complex contrivance and finished workmanship. Having secured one to his mind, and which for many years after was his constant pocket-companion, he wrote his name on a card, "Walter Scott, Abbotsford," and directed it to be engraved on the handle. On his mentioning this acquisition at breakfast, young Gala expressed his desire to equip himself in like fashion, and was directed to the shop accordingly. When he had purchased a similar knife, and produced his name in turn for the engraver, the master cutler eyed the signature for a moment, and exclaimed—"John Scott of Gala! Well, I hope your ticket may serve me in as good stead as another Mr Scott's has just done. Upon my word, one of my best men, an honest fellow from the North, went out of his senses when he saw it—he offered me a week's work if I would let him keep

it to himself—and I took *Saunders* at his word." Scott used to talk of this as one of the most gratifying compliments he ever received in his literary capacity.

In a letter to Morritt, he says:—"We visited Corby Castle on our return to Scotland, which remains, in point of situation, as beautiful as when its walks were celebrated by David Hume, in the only rhymes he was ever known to be guilty of. Here they are, from a pane of glass in an inn at Carlisle:—

> 'Here chicks in eggs for breakfast sprawl,
> Here godless boys God's glories squall,
> Here Scotchmen's heads do guard the wall,
> But Corby's walks atone for all.'

Would it not be a good quiz to advertise *The Poetical Works of David Hume*, with notes, critical, historical, and so forth —with an historical inquiry into the use of eggs for breakfast; a physical discussion on the causes of their being addled; a history of the English Church music, and of the choir of Carlisle in particular; a full account of the affair of 1745, with the trials, last speeches, and so forth of the poor *plaids* who were strapped up at Carlisle; and lastly, a full and particular description of Corby, with the genealogy of every family who ever possessed it? I think, even without more than the usual waste of margin, the Poems of David would make a decent twelve shilling touch. I shall think about it when I have exhausted mine own *century of inventions*."

Reaching Abbotsford, Scott found with his family his old friend Mr Skene of Rubislaw, who had expected him to come home sooner, and James Ballantyne, who had arrived with a copious budget of bills, calenders, booksellers' letters, and proof-sheets. From each of these visitors' *memoranda* I now extract an anecdote. Mr Skene's is of a small enough matter, but still it places the man so completely before myself, that I am glad he thought it worth

setting down. "During Scott's absence," says his friend, "his wife had had the tiny drawing-room of the cottage fitted up with new chintz furniture—everything had been set out in the best style—and she and her girls had been looking forward to the pleasure which they supposed the little surprise of the arrangements would give him. He was received in the spruce fresh room, set himself comfortably down in the chair prepared for him, and remained in the full enjoyment of his own fireside, and a return to his family circle, without the least consciousness that any change had taken place—until, at length, Mrs Scott's patience could hold out no longer, and his attention was expressly called to it. The vexation he showed at having caused such a disappointment, struck me as amiably characteristic—and in the course of the evening he every now and then threw out some word of admiration to reconsole *mamma*."

Ballantyne's note of their next morning's conference is in these terms:—"He had just been reviewing a pageant of emperors and kings, which seemed, like another Field of the Cloth of Gold, to have been got up to realize before his eyes some of his own splendid descriptions. I begged him to tell me what was the general impression left on his mind. He answered, that he might now say he had seen and conversed with all classes of society, from the palace to the cottage, and including every conceivable shade of science and ignorance—but that he had never felt awed or abashed except in the presence of one man—the Duke of Wellington. I expressed some surprise. He said I ought not, for that the Duke of Wellington possessed every one mighty quality of the mind in a higher degree than any other man did, or had ever done. He said he beheld in him a great soldier and a great statesman—the greatest of each. When it was suggested that the Duke, on his part, saw before him a great poet and novelist, he smiled, and said, 'What would the Duke of Wellington think of a few *bits of novels*, which perhaps he had never read, and for which the strong proba-

bility is that he would not care a sixpence if he had?' You are not," (adds Ballantyne) "to suppose that he looked sheepish or embarrassed in the presence of the Duke—indeed you well know that he did not, and could not do so; but the feeling, qualified and modified as I have described it, unquestionably did exist to a certain extent. Its origin forms a curious moral problem; and may probably be traced to a secret consciousness, which he might not himself advert to, that the Duke, however great as a soldier and statesman, was so defective in imagination as to be incapable of appreciating that which had formed the charm of his own life, as well as of his works."[1]

Two years after this time, when Mr Washington Irving visited Scott, he walked with him to a quarry, where his people were at work. "The face of the humblest dependent," he says, "brightened at his approach—all paused from their labour to have a pleasant 'crack wi' the laird.' Among the rest was a tall straight old fellow, with a healthful complexion and silver hairs, and a small round-crowned

[1] It is proper to add to Mr Ballantyne's solution of his "curious moral problem," that he was in his latter days a strenuous opponent of the Duke of Wellington's politics; to which circumstance he ascribes, in these same *memoranda*, the only coolness that ever occurred between him and Scott. I think it very probable that Scott had his own first interview with the Duke in his mind when he described the introduction of Roland Græme to the Regent Murray in the Abbot:—"Such was the personage before whom Roland Graham now presented himself with a feeling of breathless awe, very different from the usual boldness and vivacity of his temper. In fact he was, from education and nature, much more easily controlled by the moral superiority arising from the elevated talents and renown of those with whom he conversed, than by pretensions founded only on rank or external show. He might have braved with indifference the presence of an Earl merely distinguished by his belt and coronet; but he felt overawed in that of the eminent soldier and statesman, the wielder of a nation's power, and the leader of her armies."

white hat. He had been about to shoulder a hod, but paused, and stood looking at Scott with a slight sparkling of his blue eye as if waiting his turn; for the old fellow knew he was a favourite. Scott accosted him in an affable tone, and asked for a pinch of snuff. The old man drew forth a horn snuff-box. 'Hoot man,' said Scott, 'not that old mull. Where's the bonnie French one that I brought you from Paris?' 'Troth, your honour,' replied the old fellow, 'sic a mull as that is nae for week-days.' On leaving the quarry, Scott informed me, that, when absent at Paris, he had purchased several trifling articles as presents for his dependents, and, among others, the gay snuff-box in question, which was so carefully reserved for Sundays by the veteran. 'It was not so much the value of the gifts,' said he, 'that pleased them, as the idea that the laird should think of them when so far away.'"

One more incident of this return—it was told to me by himself, some years afterwards, with gravity, and even sadness. "The last of my chargers," he said, "was a high-spirited and very handsome one, by name Daisy, all over white, without a speck, and with such a mane as Rubens delighted to paint. He had, among other good qualities, one always particularly valuable in my case, that of standing like a rock to be mounted. When he was brought to the door, after I came home from the Continent, instead of signifying, by the usual tokens, that he was pleased to see his master, he looked askant at me like a devil; and when I put my foot in the stirrup, he reared bolt upright, and I fell to the ground rather awkwardly. The experiment was repeated twice or thrice, always with the same result. It occurred to me that he might have taken some capricious dislike to my dress; and Tom Purdie, who always falls heir to the white hat and green jacket, and so forth, when Mrs Scott has made me discard a set of garments, was sent for, to try whether these habiliments would produce him a similar reception from his old friend Daisy:—but Daisy al-

lowed Tom to back him with all manner of gentleness. The thing was inexplicable—but he had certainly taken some part of my conduct in high dudgeon and disgust; and after trying him again, at the interval of a week, I was obliged to part with Daisy—and wars and rumours of wars being over, I resolved thenceforth to have done with such dainty blood. I now stick to a good sober cob." Somebody suggested, that Daisy might have considered himself as ill-used, by being left at home when *the Laird* went on his journey. "Ay," said he, "these creatures have many thoughts of their own, no doubt, that we can never penetrate." Then laughing, "Troth," said he, "maybe some bird had whispered Daisy that I had been to see the grand reviews at Paris on a little scrag of a Cossack, while my own gallant trooper was left behind bearing Peter and the post-bag to Melrose."

Scott had written verse as well as prose during his travels. "The Field of Waterloo" was published before the end of October; the profits of the first edition being his contribution to the fund raised for the relief of the widows and children of the soldiers slain in the battle. This piece appears to have disappointed those most disposed to sympathize with the author's views and feelings. The descent is indeed heavy from his Bannockburn to his Waterloo: the presence, or all but visible reality of what his dreams cherished, seems to have overawed his imagination, and tamed it into a weak pomposity of movement. The burst of pure native enthusiasm upon the *Scottish* heroes that fell around the Duke of Wellington's person, bears, however, the broadest marks of the "Mighty Minstrel:"

——"Saw gallant Miller's fading eye
Still bent where Albyn's standards fly,
And Cameron, in the shock of steel,
Die like the offspring of Lochiel," &c.;—

and this is far from being the only redeeming passage. The poem was the first upon a subject likely to be suffi-

ciently hackneyed; and, having the advantage of coming out in a small cheap form—(prudently imitated from Murray's innovation with the tales of Byron, which was the deathblow to the system of verse in quarto)—it attained rapidly a measure of circulation above what had been reached either by Rokeby or the Lord of the Isles.

Meanwhile the revision of Paul's Letters was proceeding; and Scott had almost immediately on his return concluded his bargain for the first edition of a third novel—*The Antiquary;* nor was it much later that he completed rather a tedious negotiation with another bonnet-laird, and added the lands of *Kaeside* to Abbotsford—witness the last words of a letter to Miss Baillie, dated Nov. 12:—"My eldest boy is already a bold horseman and a fine shot, though only about fourteen years old. I assure you I was prouder of the first black-cock he killed, than I have been of anything whatever since I first killed one myself, and that is twenty years ago. This is all stupid gossip; but, as Master Corporal Nym says, 'things must be as they may:' you cannot expect grapes from thorns, or much amusement from a brain bewildered with thorn hedges at Kaeside, for such is the sonorous title of my new possession, in virtue of which I subscribe myself,

ABBOTSFORD & KAESIDE."

His pride in the young heir of *Abbotsford and Kaeside* was much gratified about this time, on occasion of a solemn football match *more majorum*, held under the auspices of the Duke of Buccleuch on the famous field of Carterhaugh, the scene of Montrose's last battle. The combatants on one side were picked men of the town of Selkirk, duly marshalled and led by their Provost; on the other, yeomen and shepherds of the vale of Yarrow, at whose head marched the Duke's gay and good-humoured brother-in-law, Lord Home, well pleased with this festive mockery of old feuds, which would have been forgotten ages before but for the ballad so dear to the burghers,—

'Tis up wi' the Sutors o' Selkirk,
And 'tis down wi' the Earl of Home.

His Lordship's lieutenant was James Hogg, now ranked among the tenantry of Yarrow; and the muster being complete—to quote the Edinburgh newspaper of 15th December—"The ancient banner of the Buccleuch family, a curious and venerable relique, emblazoned with armorial bearings, and with the word *Bellendaine*, the ancient war-cry of the clan of Scott, was displayed, as on former occasions when the chief took the field in person, whether for the purpose of war or sport. The banner was delivered by Lady Ann Scott to Master Walter Scott, younger of Abbotsford, who attended suitably mounted and armed, and, riding over the field, displayed it to the sound of the war-pipes, and amid the acclamations of the assembled spectators, who could not be fewer than 2000 in number. That this singular renewal of an ancient military custom might not want poetical celebrity, verses were distributed among the spectators, composed for the occasion by Mr Walter Scott and the Ettrick Shepherd. . . . . The parties parted with equal honours, but, before they left the ground, *the Sheriff* threw up his hat, and in Lord Dalkeith's name and his own, challenged the Yarrow men, on the part of the Sutors, to a match to be played upon the first convenient opportunity." The newspaper then gives Scott's "Lifting of the Banner:"—

"Then up with the Banner! let forest winds fan her!
She has blazed over Ettrick eight ages and more;
In sport we'll attend her, in battle defend her,
With heart and with hand, like our Fathers before;"

—and that excellent ditty by Hogg, entitled "The Ettrick Garland to the Ancient Banner of the House of Buccleuch:"—

"All hail! memorial of the brave
The liegemen's pride, the Border's awe!
May thy grey pennon never wave
On sterner field than Carterhaugh."

I have no doubt the Sheriff of the Forest was a prouder man, when he saw his boy ride about Carterhaugh with the pennon of Bellenden, than when Platoff mounted himself for the imperial review of the *Champ de Mars.*

Mr Hogg in his Autobiography informs us that when the more distinguished part of the company assembled on the conclusion of the sport to dine at Bowhill, he was proceeding to place himself at a particular table—but the Sheriff seized his arm, told him *that* was reserved for the nobility, and seated him at an inferior board—" between himself and the Laird of Harden." " The fact is," says Hogg, " I am convinced he was sore afraid of my getting to be too great a favourite among the young ladies of Buccleuch !" Who can read this, and not be reminded of Sancho Panza and the Duchess ? And, after all, he quite mistook what Scott had said to him ; there was no *high table for the nobility*—but there was a *side-table for the children*, at which, when the Shepherd was about to seat himself, his friend probably whispered that it was reserved for the " *little* lords and ladies, and their playmates."—Hogg was incurable ; if it had been otherwise, he must have been cured, for a little time at least, by some incidents of the preceding winter. He then, being as usual in pecuniary straits, projected a work, to be called " The Poetic Mirror," in which should appear some piece by each popular poet of the time, the whole to be edited by himself, and published for his benefit ; and he addressed, accordingly, to his brother bards a circular petition for their best assistance. Scott—like Byron and most others—declined the proposition. His letter has not been preserved, but nobody can suspect that it was uncourteous. The Shepherd, however, took some phrase in high dudgeon, and penned an answer virulently insolent in spirit and in language, accusing him of base jealousy of his own genius. I am not sure whether it was on this or another occasion of the like sort, that James varied the usual formulas of

epistolary composition, by beginning with "Damned Sir," and ending, "Believe me, Sir, yours with disgust, &c.;" but the performance was such that no intercourse took place for some weeks, or perhaps months, afterwards. The letter in which Hogg at length solicits a renewal of kindliness, says nothing, it may be observed, of the circumstance which, according to his Autobiography, had caused him to repent of his suspicions. The fact was, that hearing, shortly after the receipt of the offensive epistle, that the Shepherd was confined to his lodgings, in an obscure alley of Edinburgh, by a dangerous illness, Scott called on a kind friend and protector of his, Mr John Grieve (a hatter on the North Bridge) to make inquiries about him, and to offer to take on himself the expenses of the best medical attendance. He had, however, cautioned the worthy hatter that no hint of this offer must reach Hogg; and in consequence, it might perhaps be the Shepherd's feeling at the time that he should not, in addressing his life-long benefactor, betray any acquaintance with this recent interference on his behalf. There can be no doubt, however, that he obeyed the genuine dictates of his better nature when he penned this apologetic effusion:—

"*Gabriel's Road, February* 28, 1815.

"Mr Scott,—I think it is great nonsense for two men who are friends at heart, and who ever must be so—indeed it is not in the nature of things that they can be otherwise—should be professed enemies.

"Mr Grieve and Mr Laidlaw, who were very severe on me, and to whom I was obliged to show your letter, have long ago convinced me that I mistook part of it, and that it was not me you held in such contempt, but the opinion of the public. The idea that you might mean that (though I still think the reading will bear either construction) has given me much pain; for I know I answered yours intemperately, and in a mortal rage. I meant to have enclosed yours, and begged of you to return mine, but I

cannot find it, and am sure that some one to whom I have been induced to show it, has taken it away. However, as my troubles on that subject were never like to wear to an end, I could not longer resist telling you that I am extremely vexed about it. I desire not a renewal of our former intimacy, for haply, after what I have written, your family would not suffer it; but I wish it to be understood that, when we meet *by chance*, we might shake hands, and speak to one another as old acquaintances, and likewise that we may exchange a letter occasionally, for I find there are many things which I yearn to communicate to you, and the tears rush to my eyes when I consider that I may not. If you allow of this, pray let me know, and if you do not, let me know. Indeed, I am anxious to hear from you, for 'as the day of trouble is with me, so shall my strength be.' To be friends *from the teeth forwards* is common enough; but it strikes me that there is something still more ludicrous in the reverse of the picture, and so to be enemies—and why should I be, *from the teeth forwards*, yours sincerely, JAMES HOGG?"

Scott's reply was, as Hogg says, "a brief note, telling him to think no more of the business, and come to breakfast next morning."

The year 1815 may be considered as, for Scott's peaceful tenor of life, an eventful one. That which followed has left almost its only traces in the successive appearance of nine volumes, which attest the prodigal genius and hardly less astonishing industry of the man. Early in January were published Paul's Letters to his Kinsfolk, of which I need not now say more than that they were received with lively curiosity, and general, though not vociferous applause. The first edition was an octavo of 6000 copies; and it was followed in the course of the next two or three years by a second and a third, amounting together to 3000 more. The popularity of the novelist was at its height; and this admitted, if not avowed, specimen of Scott's prose, must

have been perceived by all who had any share of discrimination, to flow from the same pen.

Mr Terry produced, in the spring of 1816, a dramatic piece entitled "Guy Mannering," which met with great success on the London boards, and still continues to be a favourite with the theatrical public. What share the novelist himself had in this first specimen of what he used to call the "art of *Terryfying*," I cannot exactly say; but his correspondence shews that the pretty song of the *Lullaby* was not his only contribution to it; and I infer that he had taken the trouble to modify the plot, and re-arrange, for stage purposes, a considerable part of the original dialogue.

Early in May appeared the novel of "The Antiquary," which seems to have been begun a little before the close of 1815. It came out at a moment of domestic distress. His brother Major John Scott, whose health had long been feeble, died on the 8th of May. The Major, from all I have heard, was a sober, sedate bachelor, of dull mind and frugal tastes, who, after his retirement from the army, divided his time between his mother's primitive fireside, and the society of a few whist-playing brother officers, that met for an evening rubber at Fortune's tavern. He left some L.6000 to be divided between his two surviving brothers; and Walter thus writes on the occasion to his friend at Rokeby: "Though we were always on fraternal terms of mutual kindness and good-will, yet our habits of life, our tastes for society and circles of friends, were so totally different, that there was less frequent intercourse between us than our connexion and real liking to each other might have occasioned. Yet it is a heavy consideration to have lost the last but one who was interested in our early domestic life, our habits of boyhood, and our first friends and connexions. It makes one look about and see how the scene has changed around him, and how he himself has been changed with it. My only remaining brother is in

Canada, and seems to have an intention of remaining there; so that my mother, now upwards of eighty, has now only one child left to her out of thirteen whom she has borne. She is a most excellent woman, possessed, even at her advanced age, of all the force of mind and sense of duty which have carried her through so many domestic griefs, as the successive deaths of eleven children, some of them come to men and women's estate, naturally infers. She is the principal subject of my attention at present, and is, I am glad to say, perfectly well in body and composed in mind. . . . . I sent you, some time since, The Antiquary. It is not so interesting as its predecessors—the period did not admit of so much romantic situation. But it has been more fortunate than any of them in the sale, for 6000 went off in the first six days, and it is now at press again; which is very flattering to the unknown author." In a letter of the same date to Terry, Scott says—"It wants the romance of Waverley and the adventure of Guy Mannering; and yet there is some salvation about it, for if a man will paint from nature, he will be likely to amuse those who are daily looking at it."

After a little pause of hesitation, it attained popularity not inferior to Guy Mannering; and though the author appears for a moment to have shared the doubts which he read in the countenance of James Ballantyne, it certainly was, in the sequel, his chief favourite among all his novels. Nor is it difficult to account for this preference, without laying any stress on the fact that, during a few short weeks, it was pretty commonly talked of as a falling off from its immediate predecessors—and that some minor critics re-echoed this in print. In that view, there were many of its successors that had stronger claims on the parental instinct of protection. But the truth is, that although Scott's Introduction of 1830 represents him as pleased with fancying that, in the principal personage, he had embalmed a worthy friend of his boyish days, his own antiquarian pro-

pensities, originating perhaps in the kind attentions of George Constable of Wallace-Craigie, and fostered not a little, at about as ductile a period, by those of old Clerk of Eldin, and John Ramsay of Ochtertyre, had by degrees so developed themselves, that he could hardly, even when the Antiquary was published, have scrupled about recognising a quaint caricature of the founder of Abbotsford Museum, in the inimitable portraiture of the Laird of Monkbarns. The Descriptive Catalogue of that collection which he began towards the close of his life, but, alas! never finished, is entitled "*Reliquiæ Trottcosianæ—or the Gabions of the late Jonathan Oldbuck, Esq.*" But laying this, which might have been little more than a good-humoured pleasantry, out of the question, there is assuredly no one of all his works on which more of his own early associations have left their image. Of those early associations, as his full-grown tastes were all the progeny, so his genius, in all its happiest efforts, was the "Recording Angel;" and when George Constable first expounded his "Gabions" to the child that was to immortalize his name, they were either wandering hand in hand over the field where the grass still grew rank upon the grave of *Balmawhapple*, or sauntering on the beach where the *Mucklebackets* of Prestonpans dried their nets, singing

"Weel may the boatie row, and better may she speed,
O weel may the boatie row that wins the bairns' bread"—

or telling wild stories about cliff-escapes and the funerals of shipwrecked fishermen.

Considered by itself, this novel seems to me to possess, almost throughout, in common with its two predecessors, a kind of simple unsought charm, which the subsequent works of the series hardly reached, save in occasional snatches:—like them it is, in all its humbler and softer scenes, the transcript of actual Scottish life, as observed by the man himself. And I think it must also be allowed that he has nowhere displayed his highest art, that of skil-

ful contrast, in greater perfection. Even the tragic romance of Waverley does not set off its MacWheebles and Callum Begs better than the oddities of Jonathan Oldbuck and his circle are relieved, on the one hand by the stately gloom of the Glenallans, on the other by the stern affliction of the poor fisherman, who, when discovered repairing the "auld black bitch o' a boat" in which his boy had been lost, and congratulated by his visitor on being capable of the exertion, makes answer—"And what would you have me to do, unless I wanted to see four children starve, because one is drowned? *It's weel wi' you gentles, that can sit in the house wi' handkerchers at your een, when ye lose a friend; but the like o' us maun to our wark again, if our hearts were beating as hard as my hammer.*"

It may be worth noting, that it was in correcting the proof-sheets of this novel that Scott first took to equipping his chapters with mottoes of his own fabrication. On one occasion he happened to ask John Ballantyne, who was sitting by him, to hunt for a particular passage in Beaumont and Fletcher. John did as he was bid, but did not succeed in discovering the lines. "Hang it, Johnnie," cried Scott, "I believe I can make a motto sooner than you will find one." He did so accordingly; and from that hour, whenever memory failed to suggest an appropriate epigraph, he had recourse to the inexhaustible mines of "*old play*" or "*old ballad*," to which we owe some of the most exquisite verses that ever flowed from his pen.

Unlike, I believe, most men, whenever Scott neared the end of one composition, his spirit seems to have caught a new spring of buoyancy, and before the last sheet was sent from his desk, he had crowded his brain with the imagination of another fiction. The Antiquary was published, as we have seen, in May, but by the beginning of April he had already opened to the Ballantynes the plan of the first *Tales of my Landlord*; and—to say nothing of *Harold the Dauntless*, which he began shortly after the Bridal of

Triermain was finished, and which he seems to have kept before him for two years as a congenial plaything, to be taken up whenever the coach brought no proof-sheets to jog him as to serious matters—he had also, before this time, undertaken to write the historical department of the Register for 1814. He had not yet collected the materials requisite for his historical sketch of a year distinguished for the importance and complexity of its events; but these, he doubted not, would soon reach him, and he felt no hesitation about pledging himself to complete, not only that sketch, but four new volumes of prose romances—and his Harold the Dauntless also, if Ballantyne could make any suitable arrangement on that score—between the April and the Christmas of 1816.

The Antiquary had been published by Constable, but I presume that, in addition to the usual stipulations, he had been again, on that occasion, solicited to relieve John Ballantyne's stock to an extent which he did not find quite convenient; and at all events he had of late shewn a considerable reluctance to employ James Ballantyne and Co. as printers. One or other of these impediments is alluded to in this queer note of Scott's:—"Dear John,—I have seen the great swab, who is supple as a glove, and will do ALL, which some interpret NOTHING. However, we shall do well enough. W. S." "The great swab" had been admitted, almost from the beginning, into the *secret* of the Novels—and for that, among other reasons, it would have been desirable for the Novelist to have him continue the publisher without interruption; but Scott was led to suspect, that if he were called upon to conclude a bargain for a fourth novel before the third had made its appearance, his scruples as to the matter of *printing* might at least protract the treaty; and why Scott should have been urgently desirous of seeing the transaction settled at once, is sufficiently explained by the fact, that though so much of Mr John's old unfortunate stock still

remained on hand—and with it some occasional recurrence of difficulty as to *floating-bills* must be expected—while Mr James Ballantyne's management of pecuniary affairs had not been very careful[1]—nevertheless, the sanguine author had gone on purchasing one patch of land after another, until his estate had already grown from 150 to nearly 1000 acres. The property all about his original farm had been in the hands of small holders (Scotticè, *cock-lairds*); these were sharp enough to understand that their neighbour could with difficulty resist any temptation that might present itself in the shape of acres; and thus he proceeded buying up lot after lot of unimproved ground, at extravagant prices,—his "appetite increasing by what it fed on;" while the ejected yeomen set themselves down elsewhere, to fatten at their leisure upon the profits—most commonly the anticipated profits—of "The Scotch Novels."

He was ever and anon pulled up with a momentary misgiving,—and resolved that the latest acquisition should be the last, until he could get rid entirely of "John Ballantyne & Co." But, after the first and more serious embarrassments had been overcome, John was far from continuing to hold by his patron's anxiety for the total abolition of their unhappy copartnership. He, unless when some sudden emergency arose, flattered Scott's own gay imagination, by representing everything in the most smiling colours; and though Scott, in his replies, seldom failed to introduce some hint of caution—such as "*Nullum numen abest si sit prudentia*"—he more and more took home to himself the agreeable cast of his *Rigdum's* anticipations, and wrote to him in a vein as merry as his own——*e. g.*—"As for our stock,

> "'Twill be wearing awa', John,
> Like snaw-wreaths when it 's thaw, John," &c. &c. &c.

[1] In February 1816, when James Ballantyne married, it appears from letters in his handwriting that he owed to Scott more than L.3000 of personal debt.

John could never have forgotten that it was to Constable alone that his firm had more than once owed its escape from dishonour; and he must have known that, after the triumphant career of the Waverley series had once commenced, nothing could have been more easy than to bring all the affairs of "back-stock, &c." to a close, by entering into a distinct and candid treaty on that subject, in connexion with the future works of the great Novelist, either with Constable or with any other first-rate house in the trade: but he also knew that, were that unhappy firm wholly extinguished, he must himself subside into a clerk of the printing company. Therefore, in a word, he appears to have systematically disguised from Scott the extent to which the whole Ballantyne concern had been sustained by Constable—especially during his Hebridean tour of 1814, and his Continental one of 1815—and prompted and enforced the idea of trying other booksellers from time to time, instead of adhering to Constable, merely for the selfish purposes,—first, of facilitating the immediate discount of bills;—secondly, of further perplexing Scott's affairs, the entire disentanglement of which would have been, as he fancied, prejudicial to his own personal importance.

It was resolved, accordingly, to offer the risk and half profits of the first edition of another new novel—or rather collection of novels—to Mr Murray of Albemarle Street, and Mr Blackwood, who was then Murray's agent in Scotland; but it was at the same time resolved, partly because Scott wished to try another experiment on the public sagacity, but partly also, no question, from the wish to spare Constable's feelings, that the title-page of the "Tales of my Landlord" should not bear the magical words "by the Author of Waverley." The facility with which both Murray and Blackwood embraced such a proposal, as no untried novelist, being sane, could have dreamt of hazarding, shews that neither of them had any

doubt as to the identity of the author. They both considered the withholding of the avowal on the forthcoming title-page as likely to check very much the first success of the book; but they were both eager to prevent Constable's acquiring a sort of prescriptive right to publish for the unrivalled novelist, and agreed to all the terms, including a considerable burden of the endless "back-stock."

Scott's intention originally was to give in the four volumes as many tales, each having its scene laid in a different province of Scotland; but this scheme was soon abandoned: and the series included only the two stories of the Black Dwarf and Old Mortality. When the former had been printed off, Murray shewed it to Gifford, who expressed some disapprobation: and Blackwood, on hearing what the Quarterly critic thought, ventured to write to James Ballantyne, intimating his own apprehension likewise, that the Dwarf would be considered as hardly worthy of the author: he said that the groundwork was excellent, but that the execution had been too rapid—that the conclusion seemed to him very disappointing: and that if the author would recast the latter chapters, he (Mr Blackwood) would gladly take on himself the expense of cancelling the sheets. Scott, on receiving this communication, wrote to Ballantyne in terms of violent indignation, of which Blackwood had the sternest share apparently, but which I doubt not was chiefly stirred against the "coadjutor" referred to in the new publisher's epistle. "Tell him and his coadjutor," said he, "that I belong to the Black Hussars of Literature, who neither give nor receive quarter. I'll be cursed but this is the most impudent proposal that ever was made." Ballantyne translated this into courtly phrase for the eye of the parties—but Scott heard no more of preliminary criticism.

On the first of December, the Tales appeared, and notwithstanding the silence of the title-page, the change of publishers, and the attempt which had certainly been made

to vary the style both of delineation and of language, all doubts whether they were or were not from the same hand with Waverley had worn themselves out before the lapse of a week. On the 14th, the London publisher was unable to suppress his exultation, and addressed to Scott himself a letter concluding in these words:—"Heber says there are only two men in the world—Walter Scott and Lord Byron. Between you, you have given existence to a THIRD—ever your faithful servant, *John Murray*." To this cordial effusion, Scott returned a dexterous answer. It was necessary, since he had resolved against compromising his incognito, that he should be prepared not only to repel the impertinent curiosity of strangers, but to evade the proffered congratulations of overflowing kindness. He contrived, however, to do so, on this and all similar occasions, in a style of equivoque which could never be seriously misunderstood. He says to Murray:—"I give you heartily joy of the success of the Tales, although I do not claim that paternal interest in them which my friends do me the credit to assign me. I assure you I have never read a volume of them until they were printed, and can only join with the rest of the world in applauding the true and striking portraits which they present of old Scottish manners. I do not expect implicit reliance to be placed on my disavowal, because I know very well that he who is disposed not to own a work must necessarily deny it, and that otherwise his secret would be at the mercy of all who choose to ask the question, since silence in such a case must always pass for consent, or rather assent. But I have a mode of convincing you that I am perfectly serious in my denial—pretty similar to that by which Solomon distinguished the fictitious from the real mother—and that is, by reviewing the work, which I take to be an operation equal to that of quartering the child. But this is only on condition I can have Mr Erskine's assistance, who admires the work greatly more than I do, though I think the painting of the second Tale

both true and powerful. The first tale is not very original in its concoction, and lame and impotent in its conclusion."

Murray, gladly embracing this offer of an article for his journal on the Tales of my Landlord, begged Scott to take a wider scope, and dropping all respect for the idea of a divided parentage, to place together any materials he might have for the illustration of the Scotch Novels in general. What Scott's original conception had been I know not; but the able biographer of John Knox, Dr M'Crie, had, in the meantime, considered the representation of the Covenanters, in the story of Old Mortality, as so unfair as to demand at his hands a very serious rebuke. The Doctor forthwith published, in a religious magazine, a set of papers, in which the historical foundations of that tale were attacked with indignant warmth; and Scott found the impression they were producing so strong, that he finally devoted a very large part of his article for the Quarterly to an elaborate defence of his own picture of the Covenanters.[1]

[1] Since I have mentioned this reviewal, I may express here my conviction, that Erskine, not Scott, was the author of the critical estimate of the Waverley novels which it embraces—although for the purpose of mystification Scott had taken the trouble to transcribe the paragraphs in which that estimate is contained. At the same time I cannot but add that, had Scott really been the sole author of the article, he need not have incurred the severe censure which has been applied to his supposed conduct in the matter. After all, his judgment of his own works must have been allowed to be not above, but very far under the mark: and the whole affair would, I think, have been considered by every candid person exactly as the letter about Solomon and the rival mothers was by Murray, Gifford, and "the four o'clock visitors" of Albemarle Street—as a good joke. A better joke, certainly, than the allusion to the report of Thomas Scott being the author of Waverley, at the close of the paper, was never penned; and I think it includes a confession over which a misanthrope might have chuckled:—"We intended here to conclude this long article, when a strong report reached us of certain Transatlantic confessions, which, if genuine (though of this we know

The answer to Dr M'Crie, and the Introduction of 1830, have exhausted the historical materials on which he constructed his Old Mortality; and the origin of the Black Dwarf—as to the conclusion of which story he appears on reflection to have adopted the opinion of honest Blackwood—has already been mentioned in an anecdote of his early wanderings. The latter Tale, however imperfect, and unworthy as a work of art to be placed high in the catalogue of his productions, derives a singular interest from its delineation of the dark feelings so often connected with physical deformity; feelings which appear to have diffused their shadow over the whole genius of Byron—and which, but for this single picture, we should hardly have conceived ever to have passed through Scott's happier mind. All the bitter blasphemy of spirit which, from infancy to the tomb, swelled up in Byron against the unkindness of nature; which sometimes perverted even his filial love into a sentiment of diabolical malignity; all this black and desolate train of reflections must have been encountered and deliberately subdued by the manly parent of the Black Dwarf. Old Mortality, on the other hand, is remarkable as the *novelist's* first attempt to re-people the past by the power of imagination working on materials furnished by books. In Waverley he revived the fervid dreams of his boyhood, and drew, not from printed records, but from the artless oral narratives of his *Invernahyles*. In Guy Mannering and the Antiquary he embodied characters and

nothing), assign a different author to these volumes than the party suspected by our Scottish correspondents. Yet a critic may be excused seizing upon the nearest suspicious person, on the principle happily expressed by Claverhouse, in a letter to the Earl of Linlithgow. He had been, it seems, in search of a gifted weaver, who used to hold forth at conventicles: 'I sent for the webster (weaver), they brought in his *brother* for him; though he, may be, cannot preach like his brother, I doubt not but he is as well-principled as he, wherefore I thought it would be no great fault to give him the trouble to go to jail with the rest!' "—*Miscell. Prose*, xix. p. 85.

manners familiar to his own wandering youth. But whenever his letters mention Old Mortality in its progress, they represent him as strong in the confidence that the industry with which he had pored over a library of forgotten tracts would enable him to identify himself with the time in which they had birth, as completely as if he had listened with his own ears to the dismal sermons of Peden, ridden with Claverhouse and Dalzell in the rout of Bothwell, and been an advocate at the bar of the Privy Council when Lauderdale catechized and tortured the assassins of Archbishop Sharpe. To reproduce a departed age with such minute and life-like accuracy as this tale exhibits, demanded a far more energetic sympathy of imagination than had been called for in any effort of his serious verse. It is indeed most curiously instructive for any student of art to compare the Roundheads of Rokeby with the Bluebonnets of Old Mortality. For the rest—the story is framed with a deeper skill than any of the preceding novels; the canvass is a broader one; the characters are contrasted and projected with a power and felicity which neither he nor any other master ever surpassed; and notwithstanding all that has been urged against him as a disparager of the Covenanters, it is to me very doubtful whether the inspiration of romantic chivalry ever prompted him to nobler emotions than he has lavished on the re-animation of their stern and solemn enthusiasm. This work has always appeared to me the Marmion of his novels.

I have disclaimed the power of farther illustrating its historical groundworks, but I am enabled by Mr Train's kindness to give some interesting additions to Scott's own account of this novel as a composition. The generous Supervisor visited him in Edinburgh in May 1816, a few days after the publication of the Antiquary, carrying with him a purse that had belonged to Rob Roy, and also a fresh heap of traditionary gleanings—among others some story by a Mr Broadfoot, "schoolmaster at the clachan of

Penningham." Broadfoot had facetiously signed his communication *Clashbottom*,—"a professional appellation derived," says Mr Train, "from the use of the birch, and by which he was usually addressed among his companions,—who assembled, not at the Wallace Inn of Gandercleuch, but at the sign of the Shoulder of Mutton in Newton-Stewart." Scott (who already possessed Rob Roy's gun) received these gifts with benignity, and invited the friendly donor to breakfast next morning. He found him at work in his library, and surveyed with enthusiastic curiosity the furniture of the room, especially its only picture, a portrait of Graham of Claverhouse. Train expressed the surprise with which every one who had known Dundee only in the pages of the Presbyterian Annalists, must see for the first time that beautiful and melancholy visage, worthy of the most pathetic dreams of romance. Scott replied, "that no character had been so foully traduced as the Viscount of Dundee—that, thanks to Wodrow, Cruickshanks, and such chroniclers, he, who was every inch a soldier and a gentleman, still passed among the Scottish vulgar for a ruffian desperado, who rode a goblin horse, was proof against shot, and in league with the Devil." "Might he not," said Mr Train, "be made, in good hands, the hero of a national romance as interesting as any about either Wallace or Prince Charlie?" "He might," said Scott, "but your western zealots would require to be faithfully portrayed in order to bring him out with the right effect." "And what," resumed Train, "if the story were to be delivered as if from the mouth of *Old Mortality*? Would *he* not do as well as *the Minstrel* did in the Lay?" I think it certain that to this interview with Train we owe the framework of the Gandercleuch Series, as well as the adoption of Claverhouse's period for one of its first fictions. It seems also probable that we owe a further obligation to the Supervisor's presentation of Rob Roy's *spleuchan*.

Within less than a month, the Black Dwarf and Old Mortality were followed by "Harold the Dauntless, by the author of the Bridal of Triermain." This poem had been, it appears, begun several years back; nay, part of it had been actually printed before the appearance of Childe Harold, though that circumstance had escaped the author's remembrance when he penned, in 1830, his Introduction to the Lord of the Isles; for he there says, "I am still astonished at my having committed the gross error of selecting the very name which Lord Byron had made so famous." The volume was published by Messrs Constable, and had, in those booksellers' phrase, "considerable success." It has never, however, been placed on a level with Triermain; and though it contains many vigorous pictures, and splendid verses, and here and there some happy humour, the confusion and harsh transitions of the fable, and the dim rudeness of character and manners, seem sufficient to account for this inferiority in public favour. It is not surprising that the author should have redoubled his aversion to the notion of any more serious performances in verse. He had seized on an instrument of wider compass, and which, handled with whatever rapidity, seemed to reveal at every touch treasures that had hitherto slept unconsciously within him. He had thrown off his fetters, and might well go forth rejoicing in the native elasticity of his strength.

It is at least a curious coincidence in literary history, that as Cervantes, driven from the stage of Madrid by the success of Lope de Vega, threw himself into prose romance, and produced, at the moment when the world considered him as silenced for ever, the Don Quixote which has outlived Lope's two thousand triumphant dramas—so Scott, abandoning verse to Byron, should have rebounded from his fall by the only prose romances, which seem to be classed with the masterpiece of Spanish genius, by the general judgment of Europe.

CHAPTER IX.

Serious illness—Laidlaw settled at Kaeside and the Fergusons at Huntley-Burn—New House begun—Washington Irving—Publication of Rob Roy—and the Heart of Mid-Lothian—Scott in Edinburgh.—1817–1818.

NOT to disturb the narrative of his literary proceedings, I have deferred until now the mention of an attempt which Scott made during the winter of 1816–1817, to exchange his seat at the Clerk's table for one on the Bench of the Scotch Court of Exchequer. It had often occurred to me, in the most prosperous years of his life, that such a situation would have suited him better in every respect than that which he held, and that his never attaining a promotion, which the Scottish public would have considered so naturally due to his character and services, reflected little honour on his political allies. But at the period when I was entitled to hint this to him, he appeared to have made up his mind that the rank of Clerk of Session was more compatible than that of a Supreme Judge with the habits of a literary man, who was perpetually publishing, and whose writings were generally of the imaginative order. I had also witnessed the zeal with which he seconded the views of more than one of his own friends, when their ambition was directed to the Exchequer Bench. I remained, in short, ignorant that he ever had seriously thought of it for himself, until the ruin of his worldly fortunes in 1826; nor had I any information that his wish to obtain it had ever been distinctly stated, until his letters to the late Duke of Buccleuch were placed in my hands after his death. The Duke's answers show the warmest anxiety to serve Scott, but refer to private matters, which rendered it incon-

sistent with his Grace's feelings to interfere at the time with the distribution of Crown patronage. I incline to think, on the whole, that the death of this nobleman, which soon after left the influence of his house in abeyance, must have, far more than any other circumstance, determined Scott to renounce all notions of altering his professional position.

Early in 1817, he was visited, for the first time since his childish years, with a painful illness, which proved the harbinger of a series of attacks, all nearly of the same kind, continued at short intervals during more than two years. The reader has been told already how widely his habits of life when in Edinburgh differed from those of Abbotsford. They at all times did so to a great extent; but he had pushed his liberties with a most robust constitution to a perilous extreme while the affairs of the Ballantynes were labouring. "I had," he writes to Morritt (12th March) "been plagued all through this winter with cramps in my stomach, which I endured as a man of mould might, and endeavoured to combat them by drinking scalding water, and so forth. As they grew rather unpleasantly frequent, I had reluctant recourse to Baillie. But before his answer arrived, on the 5th, I had a most violent attack, which broke up a small party at my house, and sent me to bed roaring like a bull-calf. All sorts of remedies were applied, as in the case of Gil Blas' pretended colic, but such was the pain of the real disorder that it outdeviled the Doctor hollow. Even heated salt, which was applied in such a state that it burned my shirt to rags, I hardly felt when clapped to my stomach. At length the symptoms became inflammatory, and dangerously so, the seat being the diaphragm. They only gave way to very profuse bleeding and blistering, which, under higher assistance, saved my life. My recovery was slow and tedious from the state of exhaustion. I could neither stir for weakness and giddiness, nor read for dazzling in my eyes,

nor listen for a whizzing sound in my ears, nor even think for lack of the power of arranging my ideas. So I had a comfortless time of it for about a week. Even yet I by no means feel, as the copy-book hath it,

'The lion bold, which the lamb doth hold—'

on the contrary, I am as weak as water. They tell me (of course) I must renounce every creature comfort, as my friend Jedediah calls it. As for dinner and so forth, I care little about it—but toast and water, and three glasses of wine, sound like hard laws to me. However, to parody the lamentation of Hassan, the camel-driver,

'The lily health outvies the grape's bright ray,
And life is dearer than the usquebæ.' "

The scene of the 5th was more than once repeated. His friends in Edinburgh continued all that spring in great anxiety on his account. Scarcely, however, had the first symptoms yielded to severe medical treatment, than he is found to have beguiled the intervals of his suffering by planning a drama on a story supplied to him by one of Train's communications, which he desired to present to Terry, on behalf of the actor's first-born son, who had been christened by the name of Walter Scott Terry.[1] Such was the origin of "The Fortunes of Devorgoil"—a piece which, though completed soon afterwards, and submitted by Terry to many manipulations with a view to the stage, was never received by any manager, and was first published, towards the close of the author's life, under the title, slightly altered for an obvious reason, of "The Doom of Devorgoil."

On the 29th of March John Philip Kemble, after going through the round of his chief parts, to the delight of the Edinburgh audience, took his final leave of them as *Macbeth*, and in the costume of that character delivered a farewell address, penned for him by Scott. No one who witnessed

[1] Mr W. S. Terry lived to distinguish himself as an officer in the East India army: and fell in action against the Affghans.

that scene, and heard the lines as then recited, can ever expect to be again interested to the same extent by anything occurring within the walls of a theatre; nor was I ever present at any public dinner in all its circumstances more impressive than that which occurred a few days afterwards, when Kemble's Scotch friends and admirers assembled around him—Francis Jeffrey being chairman, Walter Scott and John Wilson the croupiers.

His letters to Terry about this time prove sufficiently that, whatever pain he endured, he had no serious apprehensions as to his health; for a principal theme is the plan of founding a new house at Abbotsford; and by and bye the details of that project wholly engross the correspondence. The foundation was in part laid early in the ensuing summer: an unfortunate feature in Scott's history; for he was by degrees tempted to extend his design, and the ultimate expense very greatly exceeded all his and his friends' calculations.

Shortly before this time, Mr William Laidlaw had met with misfortunes, which rendered it necessary for him to give up his farm. He was now anxiously looking about him for some new establishment, and Scott invited him to occupy a house on his property, and endeavour, under his guidance, to make such literary exertions as might improve his income. The prospect of obtaining such a neighbour was, no doubt, the more welcome to "Abbotsford and Kaeside," from its opening at this period of fluctuating health; and Laidlaw, who had for twenty years loved and revered him, considered the proposal with far greater delight than the most lucrative appointment on any noble domain in the island could have afforded him. Though possessed of a lively and searching sagacity as to things in general, he had always been as to his own worldly interests simple as a child. His tastes and habits were all modest; and when he looked forward to spending the remainder of what had not hitherto been a successful life, under the sha-

dow of the genius that he had worshipped almost from boyhood, his gentle heart was all happiness. He surveyed with glistening eyes the humble cottage in which his friend proposed to lodge him, his wife, and his little ones, and said to himself that he should write no more sad songs on *Forest Flittings*.[1]

He soon procured a little employment from Mr Blackwood, who was then starting his Magazine; and Scott being at the moment too unwell to write himself, dictated to and *for* him the anecdotes of gypsies which appeared in Blackwood's opening Number, and have since been placed among the appendages of Guy Mannering. By and bye, when the Laird had made other additions to his territory, and especially to his woodlands, Laidlaw's active watchfulness over the habits and comforts of the cottars employed well entitled him to a regular salary as *factor*. Meantime occasional literary jobs both amused and helped him; and any deficiency of funds was no doubt supplied in the way that may be guessed from Scott's delicate and thoughtful notes and letters to his most amiable friend: for example, this of November 1817:—"Dear Willie,—I hope you will not quarrel with my last. Believe me that, to a sound judging and philosophical mind, this same account of Dr. and Cr. which fills up so much time in the world, is comparatively of very small value. When you get rich, unless I thrive in the same proportion, I will request your assistance for less, for little, or for nothing, as the case may require; but while I wear my seven-leagued boots to stride in triumph over moss and muir, it would be very silly in either of us to let a cheque twice a-year of £25 make a difference between us. But all this

[1] Laidlaw's song of "Lucy's Flitting"—a simple and pathetic picture of a poor Ettrick maiden's feelings in leaving a service where she had been happy—must ever be a favourite with all who understand the delicacies of the Scottish dialect, and the manners of the district in which the scene is laid.

we will talk over when we meet. I meditate one day a *coup-de-maitre*, which will make my friend's advice and exertion essential—indeed worthy of much better remuneration."

Neither the recurring fits of cramp, nor anything else, could, as yet, interrupt Scott's literary industry. Before Whitsuntide he had made his bargain for another novel. This was at once tendered to Constable, who was delighted to interrupt in his turn the connection with Murray and Blackwood, and readily agreed to meet John Ballantyne at Abbotsford, where all was speedily settled.

As to *Rob Roy*, the title was suggested by Constable, and he told me years afterwards the difficulty he had to get it adopted by the author. "What!" said he, "Mr Accoucheur, must you be setting up for Mr Sponsor too?—but let's hear it." Constable said the name of the real hero would be the best possible name for the book. "Nay," answered Scott, "never let me have to write up to a name. You well know I have generally adopted a title that told nothing."—The bookseller, however, persevered; and after the trio had dined, these scruples gave way.

On rising from table, according to Constable, they sallied out to the green before the door of the cottage, and all in the highest spirits enjoyed the fine May evening. John Ballantyne, hopping up and down in his glee, exclaimed, "Is Rob's gun here, Mr Scott; would you object to my trying the auld barrel with a *few de joy?*"—"Nay, Mr Puff," said Scott, "it would burst, and blow you to the devil before your time."—"Johnny, my man," said Constable, "what the mischief puts drawing at sight into *your* head?" Scott laughed heartily at this innuendo; and then observing that the little man felt somewhat sore, called attention to the notes of a bird in the adjoining shrubbery. "And by the bye," said he, as they continued listening, "'tis a long time, Johnny, since we have had the Cobbler of Kelso." Mr Puff forthwith jumped up on a mass of stone, and seating

himself in the proper attitude of one working with his awl, began a favourite interlude, mimicking a certain son of Crispin, at whose stall Scott and he had often lingered when they were schoolboys, and a blackbird, the only companion of his cell, that used to sing to him, while he talked and whistled to it all day long. With this performance Scott was always delighted: nothing could be richer than the contrast of the bird's wild sweet notes, some of which he imitated with wonderful skill, and the accompaniment of the Cobbler's hoarse cracked voice, uttering all manner of endearing epithets, which Johnny multiplied and varied in a style worthy of the Old Women in Rabelais at the birth of Pantagruel. I often wondered that Mathews, who borrowed so many good things from John Ballantyne, allowed this Cobbler, which was certainly the masterpiece, to escape him.

Scott himself had probably exceeded that evening the three glasses of wine sanctioned by his Sangrados. "I never," said Constable, "had found him so disposed to be communicative about what he meant to do. Though he had had a return of his illness but the day before, he continued for an hour or more to walk backwards and forwards on the green, talking and laughing—he told us he was sure he would make a hit in a Glasgow weaver, whom he would *ravel up with Rob;* and fairly outshone the Cobbler, in an extempore dialogue between the bailie and the cateran—something not unlike what the book gives us as passing in the Glasgow tolbooth."

Mr Puff might well exult in the "full and entire success" of his trip to Abbotsford. His friend had made it a *sine qua non* with Constable that he should have a third share in the bookseller's moiety of the bargain—and though Johnny had no more trouble about the publishing or selling of Rob Roy than his own Cobbler of Kelso, this stipulation had secured him a *bonus* of L.1200 before two years passed. Moreover, one must admire his adroitness in per-

suading Constable, during their journey back to Edinburgh, to relieve him of that fraction of his own old stock, with which his unhazardous share in the new transaction was burdened. Scott's kindness continued as long as John Ballantyne lived, to provide for him a constant succession of similar advantages at the same easy rate; and Constable, from deference to Scott's wishes, and from views of bookselling policy, appears to have submitted to this heavy tax on his most important ventures.

During the summer term, Scott seems to have laboured chiefly on his History of 1815 for the Register, which was published in August; but he also found time to draw up a valuable introductory Essay for the richly embellished quarto, entitled "Border Antiquities," which came out a month later. Upon the rising of the Court, he made an excursion to the Lennox, chiefly that he might visit a cave at the head of Loch Lomond, said to have been a favourite retreat of his hero, Rob Roy, and thence to Glasgow, where, under the auspices of a kind and intelligent acquaintance, Mr John Smith, bookseller, he refreshed his recollection of the noble cathedral, and other localities of the birthplace of Bailie Jarvie.

By this time, the foundations of that part of the existing house of Abbotsford, which extends from the hall westwards to the original court-yard, had been laid: and Scott, on reaching home, found a new source of constant occupation in watching the proceedings of his masons. He had, moreover, no lack of employment further a-field,—for he was now negotiating with another neighbouring landowner for the purchase of an addition of more consequence than any he had hitherto made to his estate. In the course of the autumn he concluded this matter, and became, for the price of L.10,000, proprietor of the lands of *Toftfield*, on which there had recently been erected a substantial mansion-house. This circumstance offered a temptation which much quickened Scott's zeal for completing his arrange-

ment. The venerable Professor Fergusson had died a year before; his son Adam had been placed on half-pay; and Scott now saw the means of securing for himself, henceforth, the immediate neighbourhood of the companion of his youth, and his amiable sisters. Fergusson, who had written from the lines of Torres Vedras his hopes of finding, when the war should be over, some sheltering cottage upon the Tweed, within a walk of Abbotsford, was delighted to see his dreams realized; and the family took up their residence next spring at the new house of Toftfield, on which Scott then bestowed, at the ladies' request, the name of Huntley Burn:—this more harmonious designation being taken from the mountain brook which passes through its garden,—the same famous in tradition as the scene of Thomas the Rhymer's interviews with the Queen of Fairy. The upper part of the *Rhymer's Glen*, through which this brook finds its way from the Cauldsheilds Loch to Toftfield, had been included in a previous purchase. He was now master of all these haunts of "True Thomas," and of the whole ground of the battle of Melrose, from *Skirmish-field* to *Turn-again*. His enjoyment of the new territory was, however, interrupted by various returns of his cramp, and the depression of spirit which always attended, in his case, the use of opium, the only medicine that seemed to have power over the disease.

A pleasant incident belongs to August 1817. Scott had read "the History of New York by Knickerbocker," shortly after its appearance in 1812; and the admirable humour of this early work had led him to anticipate the brilliant career which its author has since run. Campbell, being no stranger to Scott's estimation of Washington Irving's genius, gave him a letter of introduction, which, halting his chaise on the high-road above Abbotsford, he modestly sent down to the house "with a card on which he had written, that he was on his way to the ruins of Melrose, and wished to know whether it would be agree-

able to Mr Scott to receive a visit from him in the course of the morning."

"The noise of my chaise," says Irving, "had disturbed the quiet of the establishment. Out sallied the warder of the castle, a black greyhound, and leaping on one of the blocks of stone, began a furious barking. This alarm brought out the whole garrison of dogs, all open-mouthed and vociferous. In a little while the lord of the castle himself made his appearance. I knew him at once, by the likenesses that had been published of him. He came limping up the gravel walk, aiding himself by a stout walking-staff, but moving rapidly and with vigour. By his side jogged along a large iron-grey staghound, of most grave demeanour, who took no part in the clamour of the canine rabble, but seemed to consider himself bound, for the dignity of the house, to give me a courteous reception.—Before Scott reached the gate, he called out in a hearty tone, welcoming me to Abbotsford, and asking news of Campbell. Arrived at the door of the chaise, he grasped me warmly by the hand: 'Come, drive down, drive down to the house,' said he, 'ye're just in time for breakfast, and afterwards ye shall see all the wonders of the Abbey.' I would have excused myself on the plea of having already made my breakfast. 'Hut, man,' cried he, 'a ride in the morning in the keen air of the Scotch hills is warrant enough for a second breakfast.' I was accordingly whirled to the portal of the cottage, and in a few moments found myself seated at the breakfast table. There was no one present but the family, which consisted of Mrs Scott; her eldest daughter, Sophia, then a fine girl about seventeen; Miss Ann Scott, two or three years younger; Walter, a well-grown stripling; and Charles, a lively boy, eleven or twelve years of age. —I soon felt myself quite at home, and my heart in a glow, with the cordial welcome I experienced. I had thought to make a mere morning visit, but found I was not to be let off so lightly. 'You must not think our neighbourhood is to be read in a morning like a newspaper,' said Scott; 'it takes several days of study for an observant traveller, that has a relish for auld-world trumpery. After breakfast you shall make your visit to Melrose Abbey; I shall not be able to accompany you, as I have some household affairs to attend to; but I will put you in charge of my son Charles, who is very learned in all things touching the old ruin and the neighbour-

hood it stands in; and he and my friend Johnnie Bower, will tell you the whole truth about it, with a great deal more that you are not called upon to believe, unless you be a true and nothing-doubting antiquary. When you come back, I'll take you out on a ramble about the neighbourhood. To-morrow we will take a look at the Yarrow, and the next day we will drive over to Dryburgh Abbey, which is a fine old ruin, well worth your seeing.'—In a word, before Scott had got through with his plan, I found myself committed for a visit of several days, and it seemed as if a little realm of romance was suddenly open before me."

After breakfast, while Scott, no doubt, wrote a chapter of Rob Roy, Mr Irving, under young Charles's guidance, saw Melrose Abbey, and had much talk with old Bower, the showman of the ruins, who was eager to enlighten in all things the Sheriff's friends. "He'll come here sometimes," said Johnny, "with great folks in his company, and the first I'll know of it is his voice calling out Johnny! —Johnny Bower!—and when I go out I'm sure to be greeted with a joke or a pleasant word. He'll stand and crack an' laugh wi' me just like an auld wife—and *to think that of a man that has such an awfu' knowledge o' history!*"

On his return from the Abbey, Irving found Scott ready for a ramble.

"As we sallied forth," he writes, "every dog in the establishment turned out to attend us. There was the old staghound, Maida, that I have already mentioned, a noble animal, and Hamlet, the black greyhound, a wild thoughtless youngster, not yet arrived at the years of discretion; and Finette, a beautiful setter, with soft, silken hair, long pendant ears, and a mild eye, the parlour favourite. When in front of the house, we were joined by a superannuated greyhound, who came from the kitchen wagging his tail; and was cheered by Scott as an old friend and comrade. In our walks, he would frequently pause in conversation, to notice his dogs, and speak to them as if rational companions; and, indeed, there appears to be a vast deal of rationality in these faithful attendants on man, derived from their close intimacy with him. Maida deported himself with a gravity becoming his age and size, and seemed to con-

sider himself called upon to preserve a great degree of dignity and decorum in our society. As he jogged along a little distance a-head of us, the young dogs would gambol about him, leap on his neck, worry at his ears, and endeavour to tease him into a gambol. The old dog would keep on for a long time with imperturbable solemnity, now and then seeming to rebuke the wantonness of his young companions. At length he would make a sudden turn, seize one of them, and tumble him in the dust, then giving a glance at us, as much as to say, 'You see, gentlemen, I can't help giving way to this nonsense,' would resume his gravity, and jog on as before. Scott amused himself with these peculiarities. 'I make no doubt,' said he, 'when Maida is alone with these young dogs, he throws gravity aside, and plays the boy as much as any of them; but he is ashamed to do so in our company, and seems to say—Ha' done with your nonsense, youngsters; what will the laird and that other gentleman think of me if I give way to such foolery?' Scott amused himself with the peculiarities of another of his dogs, a little shamefaced terrier, with large glassy eyes, one of the most sensitive little bodies to insult and indignity in the world. 'If ever he whipped him,' he said, 'the little fellow would sneak off and hide himself from the light of day in a lumber garret, from whence there was no drawing him forth but by the sound of the chopping-knife, as if chopping up his victuals, when he would steal forth with humiliated and downcast look, but would skulk away again if any one regarded him.'—His domestic animals were his friends. Everything about him seemed to rejoice in the light of his countenance. Our ramble took us on the hills commanding an extensive prospect. 'Now,' said Scott, 'I have brought you, like the pilgrim in the Pilgrim's Progress, to the top of the Delectable Mountains, that I may shew you all the goodly regions hereabouts.' . . . I gazed about me for a time with mute surprise, I may almost say with disappointment. I beheld a mere succession of grey waving hills, line beyond line, as far as my eye could reach, monotonous in their aspect, and so destitute of trees, that one could almost see a stout fly walking along their profile; and the far-famed Tweed appeared a naked stream, flowing between bare hills, without a tree or thicket on its banks; and yet such had been the magic web of poetry and romance thrown over the whole, that it had a greater charm for me than the richest scenery I had beheld

in England. I could not help giving utterance to my thoughts. Scott hummed for a moment to himself, and looked grave; he had no idea of having his muse complimented at the expense of his native hills. 'It may be pertinacity,' said he at length; 'but to my eye, these grey hills, and all this wild border country, have beauties peculiar to themselves. I like the very nakedness of the land; it has something bold, and stern, and solitary about it. When I have been for some time in the rich scenery about Edinburgh, which is like ornamented garden land, I begin to wish myself back again among my own honest grey hills; and if I did not see the heather, at least once a-year, *I think I should die!*' The last words were said with an honest warmth, accompanied by a thump on the ground with his staff, by way of emphasis, that shewed his heart was in his speech. He vindicated the Tweed, too, as a beautiful stream in itself; and observed, that he did not dislike it for being bare of trees, probably from having been much of an angler in his time; and an angler does not like to have a stream overhung by trees, which embarrass him in the exercise of his rod and line. I took occasion to plead, in like manner, the associations of early life for my disappointment in respect to the surrounding scenery. I had been so accustomed to see hills crowned with forests, and streams breaking their way through a wilderness of trees, that all my ideas of romantic landscape were apt to be well wooded. 'Ay, and that's the great charm of your country,' cried Scott. 'You love the forest as I do the heather; but I would not have you think I do not love the glory of a great woodland prospect. There is nothing I should like more than to be in the midst of one of your grand wild original forests, with the idea of hundreds of miles of untrodden forest around me. I once saw at Leith an immense stick of timber just landed from America. It must have been an enormous tree when it stood in its native soil, at its full height, and with all its branches. I gazed at it with admiration; it seemed like one of the gigantic obelisks which are now and then brought from Egypt to shame the pigmy monuments of Europe; and, in fact, these vast aboriginal trees, that have sheltered the Indians before the intrusion of the white men, are the monuments and antiquities of your country.'

"The conversation here turned upon Campbell's poem of Gertrude of Wyoming, as illustrative of the poetic materials furnished

by American scenery. Scott cited several passages of it with great delight. 'What a pity it is,' said he, 'that Campbell does not write more and oftener, and give full sweep to his genius! He has wings that would bear him to the skies; and he does, now and then, spread them grandly, but folds them up again, and resumes his perch, as if he was afraid to launch away. What a grand idea is that,' said he, 'about prophetic boding, or, in common parlance, second sight—

'Coming events cast their shadows before!'—

The fact is,' added he, 'Campbell is, in a manner, a bugbear to himself. The brightness of his early success is a detriment to all his further efforts. *He is afraid of the shadow that his own fame casts before him.*'

"We had not walked much farther, before we saw the two Miss Scotts advancing along the hill-side to meet us. The morning's studies being over, they had set off to take a ramble on the hills, and gather heather blossoms with which to decorate their hair for dinner. As they came bounding lightly like young fawns, and their dresses fluttering in the pure summer breeze, I was reminded of Scott's own description of his children, in his introduction to one of the cantos of Marmion:—

'My imps, though hardy, bold, and wild,
As best befits the mountain child,' &c.

As they approached, the dogs all sprung forward, and gambolled around them. They joined us with countenances full of health and glee. Sophia, the eldest, was the most lively and joyous, having much of her father's varied spirit in conversation, and seeming to catch excitement from his words and looks; Ann was of a quieter mood, rather silent, owing, in some measure, no doubt, to her being some years younger."

Having often, many years afterwards, heard Irving speak warmly of William Laidlaw, I must not omit the following passage:—

"One of my pleasantest rambles with Scott about the neighbourhood of Abbotsford, was taken in company with Mr William Laidlaw, the steward of his estate. This was a gentleman for whom Scott entertained a particular value. He had been born to a competency, had been well educated, his mind was richly stored with varied information, and he was a man of sterling moral worth.

Having been reduced by misfortune, Scott had got him to take charge of his estate. He lived at a small farm, on the hillside above Abbotsford, and was treated by Scott as a cherished and confidential friend, rather than a dependant. That day at dinner we had Mr Laidlaw and his wife, and a female friend who accompanied them. The latter was a very intelligent respectable person, about the middle age, and was treated with particular attention and courtesy by Scott. Our dinner was a most agreeable one, for the guests were evidently cherished visiters to the house, and felt that they were appreciated. When they were gone, Scott spoke of them in the most cordial manner. 'I wish to shew you,' said he, 'some of our really excellent, plain Scotch people: not fine gentlemen and ladies, for such you can meet everywhere, and they are everywhere the same. The character of a nation is not to be learnt from its fine folks.' He then went on with a particular eulogium on the lady who had accompanied the Laidlaws. She was the daughter, he said, of a poor country clergyman, who had died in debt, and left her an orphan and destitute. Having had a good plain education, she immediately set up a child's school, and had soon a numerous flock under her care, by which she earned a decent maintenance. That, however, was not her main object. Her first care was to pay off her father's debts, that no ill word or ill will might rest upon his memory. This, by dint of Scotch economy, backed by filial reverence and pride, she accomplished, though in the effort she subjected herself to every privation. Not content with this, she in certain instances refused to take pay for the tuition of the children of some of her neighbours, who had befriended her father in his need, and had since fallen into poverty. 'In a word,' added Scott, 'she's a fine old Scotch girl, and I delight in her more than in many a fine lady I have known, and I have known many of the finest.'

"The evening having passed away delightfully in a quaint-looking apartment, half study, half drawing-room, Scott read several passages from the old Romance of Arthur, with a fine deep sonorous voice, and a gravity of tone that seemed to suit the antiquated black-letter volume. It was a rich treat to hear such a work read by such a person, and in such a place; and his appearance, as he sat reading, in a large arm-chair, with his favourite hound Maida at his feet, and surrounded by books and reliques,

and Border trophies, would have formed an admirable and most characteristic picture. When I retired for the night, I found it almost impossible to sleep: the idea of being under the roof of Scott; of being on the Borders on the Tweed; in the very centre of that region which had, for some time past, been the favourite scene of romantic fiction; and, above all, the recollections of the ramble I had taken, the company in which I had taken it, and the conversation which had passed, all fermented in my mind, and nearly drove sleep from my pillow.

"On the following morning the sun darted his beams from over the hills through the low lattice of my window. I rose at an early hour, and looked out between the branches of eglantine which overhung the casement. To my surprise, Scott was already up, and forth, seated on a fragment of stone, and chatting with the workmen employed in the new building. I had supposed, after the time he had wasted upon me yesterday, he would be closely occupied this morning: but he appeared like a man of leisure, who had nothing to do but bask in the sunshine and amuse himself. I soon dressed myself and joined him. He talked about his proposed plans of Abbotsford: happy would it have been for him could he have contented himself with his delightful little vine-covered cottage, and the simple, yet hearty and hospitable, style in which he lived at the time of my visit."

These lines to the elder Ballantyne are without date. They accompanied, no doubt, the last proof-sheet of Rob Roy, and were therefore in all probability written about ten days before the 31st of December 1817—on which day the novel was published.

"With great joy
I send you Roy.
'Twas a tough job,
But we're done with Rob."

The novel had indeed been "a tough job"—for lightly and airily as it reads, the author had struggled almost throughout with the pains of cramp or the lassitude of opium. Calling on him one day to dun him for copy, James found him with a clean pen and a blank sheet be-

fore him, and uttered some rather solemn exclamation of surprise. "Ay, ay, Jemmy," said he, "'tis easy for you to bid me get on, but how the deuce can I make Rob Roy's wife speak, with such a *curmurring* in my guts?"

Rob and his wife, Bailie Jarvie and his housekeeper, Die Vernon and Rashleigh Osbaldistone—these boldly drawn and happily contrasted personages—were welcomed as warmly as the most fortunate of their predecessors. Constable's resolution to begin with an edition of 10,000, proved to have been as sagacious as brave; for within a fortnight a second 3000 was called for.

Scott, however, had not waited for this new burst of applause. As soon as he came within view of the completion of Rob Roy, he desired John Ballantyne to propose to Constable a second series of the Tales of my Landlord, to be comprised, like the first, in four volumes, and ready for publication by "the King's birth-day;" that is, the 4th of June 1818. "I have hungered and thirsted," he wrote, "to see the end of those shabby borrowings among friends; they have all been wiped out except the good Duke's L.4000—and I will not suffer either new offers of land or anything else to come in the way of that clearance. I expect that you will be able to arrange this resurrection of Jedediah, so that L.5000 shall be at my order."

Mr Rigdum used to glory in recounting that he acquitted himself on this occasion with a species of dexterity not contemplated in his commission. He well knew how sorely Constable had been wounded by seeing the first Tales of Jedediah published by Murray and Blackwood—and that the utmost success of Rob Roy would only double his anxiety to keep them out of the field, when the hint should be dropt that a second MS. from Gandercleuch might shortly be looked for. John therefore took a convenient opportunity to mention the new scheme as if casually—so as to give Constable the impression that the author's purpose was to divide the second series also be-

tween his old rival in Albemarle Street, of whom his jealousy was always sensitive, and his neighbour Blackwood, whom, if there had been no other grudge, the recent conduct and rapidly increasing sale of his Magazine would have been sufficient to make Constable hate with a perfect hatred. To see not only his old "Scots Magazine" eclipsed, but the authority of the Edinburgh Review itself bearded on its own soil by this juvenile upstart, was to him gall and wormwood; and, moreover, he himself had come in for his share in some of those grotesque *jeux d'esprit* by which Blackwood's young Tory wags delighted to assail their elders and betters of the Whig persuasion. To prevent the proprietor of this new journal from acquiring anything like a hold on the author of Waverley, and thus competing with himself not only in periodical literature, but in the highest of the time, was an object for which, as John Ballantyne shrewdly guessed, Constable would have made at that moment almost any sacrifice. When, therefore, the haughty but trembling bookseller—"The Lord High Constable" (as he had been dubbed by these jesters) —signified his earnest hope that the second Tales of my Landlord were destined to come out under the same auspices with Rob Roy, the plenipotentiary answered with an air of deep regret, that he feared it would be impossible for the author to dispose of the work—unless to publishers who should agree to take with it *the whole* of the remaining stock of "John Ballantyne & Co.;" and Constable, pertinaciously as he had stood out against many more modest propositions of this nature, was so worked upon by his jealous feelings, that his resolution at once gave way. He agreed on the instant to do all that John seemed to shrink from asking—and at one sweep cleared the Augean stable in Hanover Street of unsaleable rubbish to the amount of L.5270! I am assured by his surviving partner, that when he had finally redisposed of the stock, he found himself a loser by fully two-thirds of this sum. Burthened

with this heavy condition, the agreement for the sale of 10,000 copies of the embryo series was signed before the end of November 1817; and on the 7th January 1818, Scott wrote to his noble friend of Buccleuch,—" I have the great pleasure of enclosing the discharged bond which your Grace stood engaged in on my account."

The time now approached when a Commission to examine the Crown-room in the Castle of Edinburgh, which had sprung from one of Scott's conversations with the Prince Regent in 1815, was at length to be acted upon; and the result was the discovery of the long lost regalia of Scotland. Of the official proceedings of the 4th Feb. 1818, the reader has a full and particular account in an Essay which Scott penned shortly afterwards; but I may add a little incident of the 5th. He and several of his brother Commissioners then revisited the Castle, accompanied by some of the ladies of their families. His daughter Sophia told me that her father's conversation had worked her feelings up to such a pitch, that when the lid was again removed, she nearly fainted, and drew back from the circle. As she was retiring, she was startled by his voice exclaiming, in a tone of the deepest emotion, " something between anger and despair," as she expressed it, " By G—, No!" One of the Commissioners, not quite entering into the solemnity with which Scott regarded this business, had it seems made a sort of motion as if he meant to put the crown on the head of one of the young ladies near him, but the voice and aspect of the Poet were more than sufficient to make the worthy gentleman understand his error; and respecting the enthusiasm with which he had not been taught to sympathize, he laid down the ancient diadem with an air of painful embarrassment. Scott whispered, " Pray forgive me;" and turning round at the moment, observed his daughter deadly pale, and leaning by the door. He immediately drew her out of the room, and when the air had somewhat recovered her, walked with her across the Mound

to Castle Street. "He never spoke all the way home," she said, "but every now and then I felt his arm tremble; and from that time I fancied he began to treat me more like a woman than a child. I thought he liked me better, too, than he had ever done before."

At this moment, his position, take it for all in all, was, I am inclined to believe, what no other man had ever won for himself by the pen alone. His works were the daily food, not only of his countrymen, but of all educated Europe. His society was courted by whatever England could shew of eminence. Station, power, wealth, beauty, and genius, strove with each other in every demonstration of respect and worship, and—a few political fanatics and envious poetasters apart—wherever he appeared in town or country, whoever had Scotch blood in him, "gentle or simple," felt it move more rapidly through his veins when he was in the presence of Scott. To descend to what many looked on as higher things, he considered himself, and was considered by all about him, as rapidly consolidating a large fortune:—the annual profits of his novels alone had, for several years, been not less than £10,000; his domains were daily increased—his castle was rising—and perhaps few doubted that ere long he might receive from the just favour of his Prince some distinction in the way of external rank, such as had seldom before been dreamt of as the possible consequences of a mere literary celebrity. It was about this time that the compiler of these pages first had the opportunity of observing the plain easy modesty which had survived the many temptations of such a career; and the kindness of heart pervading, in all circumstances, his gentle deportment, which made him the rare, perhaps the solitary, example of a man signally elevated from humble beginnings, and loved more and more by his earliest friends and connexions, in proportion as he had fixed on himself the homage of the great and the wonder of the world.

It was during the sitting of the General Assembly of the

Kirk in May 1818, that I first had the honour of meeting him in private society: the party was not a large one, at the house of a much-valued common friend—Mr Home Drummond, the grandson of Lord Kames. Mr Scott, ever apt to consider too favourably the literary efforts of others, and more especially of very young persons, received me, when I was presented to him, with a cordiality which I had not been prepared to expect from one filling a station so exalted. This, however, is the same story that every individual, who ever met him under similar circumstances, has had to tell. When the ladies retired from the dinner-table, I happened to sit next him; and he, having heard that I had lately returned from a tour in Germany, made that country and its recent literature the subject of some conversation. In the course of it, I told him that when, on reaching the inn at Weimar, I asked the waiter whether Goethe was then in the town, the man stared as if he had not heard the name before; and that on my repeating the question, adding *Goethe der grosse dichter* (the great poet), he shook his head as doubtfully as before—until the landlady solved our difficulties, by suggesting that perhaps the traveller might mean "the *Herr Geheimer-Rath* (Privy Counsellor) *Von Goethe*."—Scott seemed amused with this, and said, "I hope you will come one of these days and see me at Abbotsford; and when you reach Selkirk or Melrose, be sure you ask even the landlady for nobody but *the Sheriff*." He appeared particularly interested when I described Goethe as I first saw him, alighting from a carriage crammed with wild plants and herbs which he had picked up in the course of his morning's botanizing among the hills above Jena. "I am glad," said he, "that my old master has pursuits somewhat akin to my own. I am no botanist, properly speaking; and though a dweller on the banks of the Tweed, shall never be knowing about Flora's beauties;[1]

[1] "What beauties does Flora disclose,
How sweet are her smiles upon Tweed," &c.
CRAWFORD.

but how I should like to have a talk with him about trees !" I mentioned how much any one must be struck with the majestic beauty of Goethe's countenance—the noblest certainly by far that I have ever yet seen—"Well," said he, "the grandest demigod I ever saw was Dr Carlyle, minister of Musselburgh, commonly called *Jupiter Carlyle*, from having sat more than once for the king of gods and men to Gavin Hamilton—and a shrewd, clever old carle was he, no doubt, but no more a poet than his precentor. As for poets, I have seen, I believe, all the best of our own time and country—and though Burns had the most glorious eyes imaginable, I never thought any of them would come up to an artist's notion of the character, except Byron." Principal Nicol of St Andrew's expressed his regret that he had never seen Lord Byron. "And the prints," resumed Scott, "give one no impression of him—the lustre is there, Doctor, but it is not lighted up. Byron's countenance is *a thing to dream of.* A certain fair lady, whose name has been too often mentioned in connection with his, told a friend of mine, that when she first saw Byron, it was in a crowded room, and she did not know who it was, but her eyes were instantly nailed, and she said to herself, *that pale face is my fate.* And, poor soul, if a godlike face and godlike powers could have made any excuse for devilry, to be sure she had one." In the course of this talk, Sir P. Murray of Ochtertyre, an old friend and schoolfellow of Scott's, asked him, across the table, if he had any faith in the antique busts of Homer. "No, truly," he answered, smiling, "for if there had been either limners or stuccoyers worth their salt in those days, the owner of such a headpiece would never have had to trail the poke. They would have alimented the honest man decently among them for a lay-figure."

A few days after this, I received a communication from the Messrs Ballantyne, to the effect that Mr Scott's various avocations had prevented him from fulfilling his agreement with them as to the historical department of the Edin-

burgh Annual Register for 1816, and that it would be acceptable to him as well as them, if I could undertake to supply it in the course of the autumn. This proposal was agreed to, and I had consequently occasion to meet him pretty often during that summer session. He told me, that if the war had gone on, he should have liked to do the historical summary as before; but that the prospect of having no events to record but radical riots, and the passing or rejecting of corn bills and poor bills, sickened him; that his health was no longer what it had been; and that though he did not mean to give over writing altogether—(here he smiled significantly, and glanced his eye towards a pile of MS. on the desk by him)—he thought himself now entitled to write nothing but what would rather be an amusement than a fatigue to him—"*Juniores ad labores.*"

He at this time occupied as his *den* a small square room, behind the dining parlour in Castle Street. It had but a single Venetian window, opening on a patch of turf not much larger than itself, and the aspect of the place was on the whole sombrous. The walls were entirely clothed with books; most of them folios and quartos, and all in that complete state of repair which at a glance reveals a tinge of bibliomania. A dozen volumes or so, needful for immediate purposes of reference, were placed close by him on a small moveable frame—something like a dumb-waiter. All the rest were in their proper niches, and wherever a volume had been lent, its room was occupied by a wooden block of the same size, having a card with the name of the borrower and date of the loan, tacked on its front. The old bindings had obviously been retouched and regilt in the most approved manner; the new, when the books were of any mark, were rich, but never gaudy—a large proportion of blue morocco—all stamped with his *device* of the portcullis, and its motto, *clausus tutus ero*—being an anagram of his name in Latin. Every case and shelf was accurately lettered, and the works arranged systematically;

history and biography on one side—poetry and the drama on another—law books and dictionaries behind his own chair. The only table was a massive piece of furniture which he had had constructed on the model of one at Rokeby; with a desk and all its appurtenances on either side, that an amanuensis might work opposite to him when he chose; and with small tiers of drawers, reaching all round to the floor. The top displayed a goodly array of session papers, and on the desk below were, besides the MS. at which he was working, sundry parcels of letters, proof-sheets, and so forth, all neatly done up with red tape. His own writing apparatus was a very handsome old box, richly carved, lined with crimson velvet, and containing ink-bottles, taper-stand, &c. in silver—the whole in such order that it might have come from the silversmith's window half an hour before. Besides his own huge elbow-chair, there were but two others in the room, and one of these seemed, from its position, to be reserved exclusively for the amanuensis. I observed, during the first evening I spent with him in this *sanctum*, that while he talked, his hands were hardly ever idle; sometimes he folded letter-covers—sometimes he twisted paper into matches, performing both tasks with great mechanical expertness and nicety; and when there was no loose paper fit to be so dealt with, he snapped his fingers, and the noble Maida aroused himself from his lair on the hearth-rug, and laid his head across his master's knees, to be caressed and fondled. The room had no space for pictures except one, a portrait of Claverhouse, which hung over the chimneypiece, with a Highland target on either side, and broadswords and dirks (each having its own story) disposed star-fashion round them. A few green tin-boxes, such as solicitors keep title-deeds in, were piled over each other on one side of the window; and on the top of these lay a fox's tail, mounted on an antique silver handle, wherewith, as often as he had occasion to take down a book, he gently brushed the

dust off the upper leaves before opening it. I think I have mentioned all the furniture of the room except a sort of ladder, low, broad, well carpetted, and strongly guarded with oaken rails, by which he helped himself to books from his higher shelves. On the top step of this convenience, Hinse of Hinsfeldt (so called from one of the German *Kinder-märchen)*, a venerable tom-cat, fat and sleek, and no longer very locomotive, usually lay watching the proceedings of his master and Maida with an air of dignified equanimity ; but when Maida chose to leave the party, he signified his inclinations by thumping the door with his huge paw, as violently as ever a fashionable footman handled a knocker in Grosvenor Square ; the Sheriff rose and opened it for him with courteous alacrity,—and then Hinse came down purring from his perch, and mounted guard by the footstool, *vice* Maida absent upon furlough. Whatever discourse might be passing, was broken every now and then by some affectionate apostrophe to these four-footed friends. He said they understood everything he said to them—and I believe they did understand a great deal of it. But at all events, dogs and cats, like children, have some infallible tact for discovering at once who is, and who is not, really fond of their company ; and I venture to say, Scott was never five minutes in any room before the little pets of the family, whether dumb or lisping, had found out his kindness for all their generation.

I never thought it lawful to keep a journal of what passes in private society, so that no one need expect from the sequel of this narrative any detailed record of Scott's familiar talk. What fragments of it have happened to adhere to a tolerably retentive memory, and may be put into black and white without wounding any feelings which my friend, were he alive, would have wished to spare, I shall introduce as the occasion suggests or serves. But I disclaim on the threshold anything more than this ; and I also wish to enter a protest once for all against the general

fidelity of several literary gentlemen who have kindly forwarded to me private lucubrations of theirs, designed to *Boswellize* Scott, and which they may probably publish hereafter. To report conversations fairly, it is a necessary pre-requisite that we should be completely familiar with all the interlocutors, and understood thoroughly all their minutest relations, and points of common knowledge and common feeling, with each other. He who does not, must be perpetually in danger of misinterpreting sportive allusions into serious statement; and the man who was only recalling, by some jocular phrase or half-phrase, to an old companion, some trivial reminiscence of their boyhood or youth, may be represented as expressing, upon some person or incident casually tabled, an opinion which he had never framed, or if he had, would never have given words to in any mixed assemblage—not even among what the world calls *friends* at his own board. In proportion as a man is witty and humorous, there will always be about him and his a widening maze and wilderness of cues and catchwords, which the uninitiated will, if they are bold enough to try interpretation, construe, ever and anon, egregiously amiss—not seldom into arrant falsity. For this one reason, to say nothing of many others, I consider no man justified in journalizing what he sees and hears in a domestic circle where he is not thoroughly at home; and I think there are still higher and better reasons why he should not do so where he is.

Before I ever met Scott in private, I had, of course, heard many people describe and discuss his style of conversation. Everybody seemed to agree that it overflowed with hearty good-humour, as well as plain unaffected good sense and sagacity; but I had heard not a few persons of undoubted ability and accomplishment maintain, that the genius of the great poet and novelist rarely, if ever, revealed itself in his talk. It is needless to say, that the persons I allude to were all his own countrymen, and themselves

imbued, more or less, with the conversational habits derived from a system of education in which the study of metaphysics occupies a very large share of attention. The best table-talk of Edinburgh was, and probably still is, in a very great measure made up of brilliant disquisition—such as might be transferred without alteration to a professor's note-book, or the pages of a critical Review—and of sharp word-catchings, ingenious thrusting and parrying of dialectics, and all the quips and quibblets of bar pleading. It was the talk of a society to which lawyers and lecturers had, for at least a hundred years, given the tone. From the date of the Union, Edinburgh ceased to be the head-quarters of the Scotch nobility—and long before the time of which I speak, they had all but entirely abandoned it as a place of residence. I think I never knew above two or three of the Peerage to have houses there at the same time—and these were usually among the poorest and most insignificant of their order. The wealthier gentry had followed their example. Very few of that class ever spent any considerable part of the year in Edinburgh, except for the purposes of educating their children, or superintending the progress of a lawsuit; and these were not more likely than a score or two of comatose and lethargic old Indians, to make head against the established influences of academical and forensic celebrity. Now Scott's tastes and resources had not much in common with those who had inherited and preserved the chief authority in this provincial hierarchy of rhetoric. He was highly amused with watching their dexterous logomachies—but his delight in such displays arose mainly, I cannot doubt, from the fact of their being, both as to subject-matter and style and method, remote *a Scævolæ studiis.* He sat by, as he would have done at a stage-play or a fencing-match, enjoying and applauding the skill exhibited, but without feeling much ambition to parade himself as a rival either of the foil or the buskin. I can easily believe, therefore,

that in the earlier part of his life—before the blaze of universal fame had overawed local prejudice, and a new generation, accustomed to hear of that fame from their infancy, had grown up—it may have been the commonly adopted creed in Edinburgh, that Scott, however distinguished otherwise, was not to be named as a table-companion in the same day with this or that master of luminous dissertation or quick rejoinder, who now sleeps as forgotten as his grandmother. It was natural enough that persons brought up in the same circle with him, who remembered all his beginnings, and had but slowly learned to acquiesce in the justice of his claim to unrivalled honour in literature, should have clung all the closer for that late acquiescence to their original estimate of him as inferior to themselves in other titles to admiration. It was also natural that their prejudice on that score should be readily taken up by the young aspirants who breathed, as it were, the atmosphere of their professional renown. Perhaps, too, Scott's steady Toryism, and the effect of his genius and example in modifying the intellectual sway of the long dominant Whigs in the north, may have some share in this matter. However, all that may have been, the substance of what I had been accustomed to hear certainly was, that Scott had a marvellous stock of queer stories, which he often told with happy effect, but that, bating these drafts on a portentous memory, set off with a simple old-fashioned *naïveté* of humour and pleasantry, his strain of talk was remarkable neither for depth of remark nor felicity of illustration; that his views and opinions on the most important topics of practical interest were hopelessly perverted by his blind enthusiasm for the dreams of by-gone ages; and that, but for the grotesque phenomenon presented by a great writer of the nineteenth century gravely uttering sentiments worthy of his own Dundees and Invernahyles, the main texture of his discourse would be pronounced by any enlightened member of modern society,

rather bald and poor than otherwise. I think the epithet most in vogue was *commonplace.*

It will be easily believed, that, in companies such as I have been alluding to, made up of, or habitually domineered over, by voluble Whigs and political economists, Scott was often tempted to put forth his Tory doctrines and antiquarian prejudices in an exaggerated shape, in colours, to say the truth, altogether different from what they assumed under other circumstances, or which had any real influence upon his mind and conduct on occasions of practical moment. But I fancy it will seem equally credible, that the most sharp-sighted of these social critics may not always have been capable of tracing, and doing justice to, the powers which Scott brought to bear upon the topics which they, not he, had chosen for discussion. In passing from a gas-lit hall into a room with wax candles, the guests sometimes complain that they have left splendour for gloom; but let them try by what sort of light it is most satisfactory to read, write, or embroider, or consider at leisure under which of the two either men or women look their best.

The strongest, purest, and least observed of all lights, is, however, daylight; and his talk was commonplace, just as sunshine is, which gilds the most indifferent objects, and adds brilliancy to the brightest. As for the old-world anecdotes which these clever persons were condescending enough to laugh at as pleasant extravagances, serving merely to relieve and set off the main stream of debate, they were often enough, it may be guessed, connected with the theme in hand by links not the less apt that they might be too subtle to catch their bedazzled and self-satisfied optics. There might be keener knowledge of human nature than was "dreamt of in their philosophy"—which passed with them for *commonplace*, only because it was clothed in plain familiar household words, not dressed up in some pedantic masquerade of antithesis.

"There are people," says Landor, "who think they write and speak finely, merely because they have forgotten the language in which their fathers and mothers used to talk to them;" and surely there are a thousand homely old proverbs, which many a dainty modern would think it beneath his dignity to quote either in speech or writing, any one of which condenses more wit (take that word in any of its senses) than could be extracted from all that was ever said or written by the *doctrinaires* of the Edinburgh school. Many of those gentlemen held Scott's conversation to be commonplace exactly for the same reason that a child thinks a perfectly limpid stream, though perhaps deep enough to drown it three times over, must needs be shallow. But it will be easily believed that the best and highest of their own idols had better means and skill of measurement: I can never forget the pregnant expression of one of the ablest of that school and party—Lord Cockburn—who, when some glib youth chanced to echo in his hearing the consolatory tenet of local mediocrity, answered quietly—"I have the misfortune to think differently from you—in my humble opinion, Walter Scott's *sense* is a still more wonderful thing than his *genius*."

Indeed I have no sort of doubt that, long before 1818, full justice was done to Scott, even in these minor things, by all those of his Edinburgh acquaintance, whether Whig or Tory, on whose personal opinion he could have been supposed to set much value. With few exceptions, the really able lawyers of his own or nearly similar standing, had ere that time attained stations of judicial dignity, or were in the springtide of practice; and in either case they were likely to consider general society much in his own fashion, as the joyous relaxation of life, rather than the theatre of exertion and display. Their tables were elegantly, some of them sumptuously spread; and they lived in a pretty constant interchange of entertainments, in every circumstance of which, conversation included, it was their

ambition to imitate those voluptuous metropolitan circles, wherein most of them had from time to time mingled, and several of them with distinguished success. Among such prosperous gentlemen, like himself past the *mezzo cammin*, Scott's picturesque anecdotes, rich easy humour, and gay involuntary glances of mother-wit, were, it is not difficult to suppose, appreciated above contributions of a more ambitious stamp; and no doubt his London *reputation de salon* (which had by degrees risen to a high pitch, although he cared nothing for it) was not without its effect in Edinburgh. But still the old prejudice lingered on in the general opinion of the place, especially among the smart praters of *the Outer-House.*

In truth, it was impossible to listen to Scott's oral narrations, whether gay or serious, or to the felicitous fun with which he parried absurdities of all sorts, without discovering better qualities in his talk than *wit*—and of a higher order; I mean especially a power of *vivid painting*—the true and primary sense of what is called *Imagination.* He was like Jacques—though not a "Melancholy Jacques;" and "moralized" a common topic "into a thousand similitudes." Shakspeare and the banished Duke would have found him "full of matter." He disliked mere disquisitions in Edinburgh, and prepared *impromptus* in London; and puzzled the promoters of such things sometimes by placid silence, sometimes by broad merriment. To such men he seemed *commonplace*—not so to the most dexterous masters in what was to some of them almost a science; not so to Rose, Hallam, Moore, or Rogers,—to Ellis, Mackintosh, Croker, or Canning.

Scott managed to give and receive such great dinners as I have been alluding to, at least as often as any other private gentleman in Edinburgh; but he very rarely accompanied his wife and daughters to the evening assemblies. which commonly ensued under other roofs—for *early to rise*, unless in the case of spare-fed anchorites, takes for

granted *early to bed.* When he had no dinner engagement, he frequently gave a few hours to the theatre; but still more frequently, when the weather was fine, and still more, I believe, to his own satisfaction, he drove out with some of his family, or a single friend, in an open carriage; the favourite rides being either to the Blackford Hills, or to Ravelston, and so home by Corstorphine; or to the beach of Portobello, where Peter was always instructed to keep his horses as near as possible to the sea. More than once, even in the first summer of my acquaintance with him, I had the pleasure of accompanying him on these evening excursions; and never did he seem to enjoy himself more fully than when placidly surveying, at such sunset or moonlight hours, either the massive outlines of his "own romantic town," or the tranquil expanse of its noble estuary. He delighted, too, in passing when he could, through some of the quaint windings of the ancient city itself, now deserted, except at mid-day, by the upper world. How often have I seen him go a long way round about, rather than miss the opportunity of halting for a few minutes on the vacant esplanade of Holyrood, or under the darkest shadows of the Castle rock, where it overhangs the Grassmarket, and the huge slab that still marks where the gibbet of Porteous and the Covenanters had its station. His coachman knew him too well to move at a Jehu's pace amidst such scenes as these. No funeral hearse crept more leisurely than did his landau up the Canongate or the Cowgate; and not a queer tottering gable but recalled to him some long-buried memory of splendour or bloodshed, which, by a few words, he set before the hearer in the reality of life. His image is so associated in my mind with the antiquities of his native place, that I cannot now revisit them without feeling as if I were treading on his gravestone.

Whatever might happen on the other evenings of the week, he always dined at home on Sunday, and usually some few friends were then with him, but never any per-

son with whom he stood on ceremony. These were, it may be readily supposed, the most agreeable of his entertainments. He came into the room rubbing his hands, his face bright and gleesome, like a boy arriving at home for the holidays, his Peppers and Mustards gambolling about his heels, and even the stately Maida grinning and wagging his tail in sympathy. Among the most regular guests on these happy evenings were, in my time, as had long before been the case, Mrs Maclean Clephane of Torloisk (with whom he agreed cordially on all subjects except the authenticity of Ossian), and her daughters, whose guardian he had become at their choice. The eldest of them had been for some years married to the Earl of Compton (now Marquis of Northampton), and was of course seldom in the north; but the others had much of the same tastes and accomplishments which so highly distinguished the late Lady Northampton; and Scott delighted especially in their proficiency in the poetry and music of their native isles. Mr and Mrs Skene of Rubislaw were frequent attendants—and so were the Macdonald-Buchanans of Drumakiln, whose eldest daughter, Isabella, was his chief favourite among all his *nieces* of the Clerks' table—as was, among the *nephews*, my own dear friend and companion, Joseph Hume, a singularly graceful young man, rich in the promise of hereditary genius, but, alas! cut off in the early bloom of his days. The well-beloved Erskine was seldom absent; and very often Terry or James Ballantyne came with him—sometimes, though less frequently, Constable. Among other persons who now and then appeared at these "dinners without the silver dishes," as Scott called them, I may mention—to say nothing of such old cronies as Mr Clerk, Mr Thomson, and Mr Kirkpatrick Sharpe—Sir Alexander Boswell of Auchinleck, who had all his father *Bozzy's* cleverness, good-humour, and jovialty, without one touch of his meaner qualities—wrote *Jenny dang the Weaver*, and some other popular songs,

which he sang capitally—and was moreover a thorough bibliomaniac; the late Sir Alexander Don of Newton, in all courteous and elegant accomplishments the model of a cavalier; and last, not least, William Allan, R.A., who had shortly before this time returned to Scotland from several years of travel in Russia and Turkey. At one of these plain hearty dinners, however, the company rarely exceeded three or four, besides the as yet undivided family.

Scott had a story of a topping goldsmith on the Bridge, who prided himself on being the mirror of Amphitryons, and accounted for his success by stating that it was his invariable custom to set his own stomach at ease, by a beefsteak and a pint of port in his back-shop, half-an-hour before the arrival of his guests. But the host of Castle Street had no occasion to imitate this prudent arrangement, for his appetite at dinner was neither keen nor nice. Breakfast was his chief meal. Before that came, he had gone through the severest part of his day's work, and then he set to with the zeal of Crabbe's Squire Tovell—

"And laid at once a pound upon his plate."

No foxhunter ever prepared himself for the field by more substantial appliances. His table was always provided, in addition to the usually plentiful delicacies of a Scotch breakfast, with some solid article, on which he did most lusty execution—a round of beef—a pasty, such as made Gil Blas's eyes water—or, most welcome of all, a cold sheep's head, the charms of which primitive dainty he has so gallantly defended against the disparaging sneers of Dr Johnson and his bear-leader.[1] A huge brown loaf flanked his elbow, and it was placed upon a broad wooden trencher, that he might cut and come again with the bolder knife. Often did the *Clerks' coach*, commonly called among themselves *the Lively*—which trundled round every morning to pick up the brotherhood, and then deposited them at the proper minute in the Parliament Close—often did this lum-

[1] See *Croker's Boswell* (edit. 1831), vol. iii. p. 38.

bering hackney arrive at his door before he had fully appeased what Homer calls "the sacred rage of hunger;" and vociferous was the merriment of the learned *uncles*, when the surprised poet swung forth to join them, with an extemporized sandwich, that looked like a ploughman's luncheon in his hand. But this robust supply would have served him in fact for the day. He never tasted anything more before dinner, and at dinner he ate almost as sparingly as Squire Tovell's niece from the boarding-school—

——"Who cut the sanguine flesh in frustums fine,
And marvelled much to see the creatures dine."

The only dishes he was at all fond of were the old-fashioned ones to which he had been accustomed in the days of Saunders Fairford; and which really are excellent dishes,—such, in truth, as Scotland borrowed from France before Catherine de Medicis brought in her Italian *virtuosi* to revolutionize the kitchen like the court. Of most of these, I believe, he has in the course of his novels found some opportunity to record his esteem. But, above all, who can forget that his King Jamie, amidst the splendours of Whitehall, thinks himself an ill-used monarch unless his first course includes *cockyleekie?*

It is a fact, which some philosophers may think worth setting down, that Scott's organization, as to more than one of the senses, was the reverse of exquisite. He had very little of what musicians call an ear; his smell was hardly more delicate. I have seen him stare about, quite unconscious of the cause, when his whole company betrayed their uneasiness at the approach of an over-kept haunch of venison; and neither by the nose or the palate could he distinguish corked wine from sound. He could never tell Madeira from Sherry; nay, an Oriental friend having sent him a butt of *sheeraz*, when he remembered the circumstance some time afterwards, and called for a bottle to have Sir John Malcolm's opinion of its quality, it turned out that his butler, mistaking the label, had already served

James Ballantyne then lived in St John Street, a row of good, old-fashioned, and spacious houses, adjoining the Canongate and Holyrood, and at no great distance from his printing establishment. He had married a few years before the daughter of a wealthy farmer in Berwickshire—a quiet amiable woman, of simple manners, and perfectly domestic habits: a group of fine young children were growing up about him; and he usually, if not constantly, had under his roof his aged mother, his and his wife's tender care of whom it was most pleasing to witness. As far as a stranger might judge, there could not be a more exemplary household, or a happier one; and I have occasionally met the poet in St John Street when there were no other guests but Erskine, Terry, George Hogarth,[1] and another intimate friend or two, and when James Ballantyne was content to appear in his own true and best colours, the kind head of his family, the respectful but honest schoolfellow of Scott, the easy landlord of a plain, comfortable table. But when any great event was about to take place in the business, especially on the eve of a new novel, there were doings of a higher strain in St John Street; and to be present at one of those scenes was truly a rich treat, even—if not especially—for persons who, like myself, had no more *knowledge* than the rest of the world as to the authorship of Waverley. Then were congregated about the printer all his own literary allies, of whom a considerable number were by no means personally familiar with "THE GREAT UNKNOWN:"—who, by the way, owed to him that widely adopted title;—and He appeared among the rest with his usual open aspect of buoyant good-humour—although it was not difficult to trace, in the occasional play of his features, the diversion

[1] George Hogarth, Esq. W.S., brother of Mrs James Ballantyne. This gentleman is now well known in the literary world; especially by a History of Music, of which all who understand that science speak highly.

it afforded him to watch all the procedure of his swelling confidant, and the curious neophytes that surrounded the well-spread board.

The feast was, to use one of James's own favourite epithets, *gorgeous;* an aldermanic display of turtle and venison, with the suitable accompaniments of iced punch, potent ale, and generous Madeira. When the cloth was drawn, the burley preses arose, with all he could muster of the port of John Kemble, and spouted with a sonorous voice the formula of Macbeth—

"Fill full!
I drink to the general joy of the whole table!"

This was followed by "The King, God bless him!" and second came—"Gentlemen, there is another toast which never has been nor shall be omitted in this house of mine —I give you the health of Mr Walter Scott with three times three!"—All honour having been done to this health, and Scott having briefly thanked the company with some expressions of warm affection to their host, Mrs Ballantyne retired;—the bottles passed round twice or thrice in the usual way;—and then James rose once more, every vein on his brow distended, his eyes solemnly fixed upon vacancy, to propose, not as before in his stentorian key, but with "'bated breath," in the sort of whisper by which a stage conspirator thrills the gallery—"*Gentlemen, a bumper to the immortal Author of Waverley!*"—The uproar of cheering, in which Scott made a fashion of joining, was succeeded by deep silence, and then Ballantyne proceeded—

"In his Lord-Burleigh look, serene and serious,
A something of imposing and mysterious"—

to lament the obscurity in which his illustrious but too modest correspondent still chose to conceal himself from the plaudits of the world—to thank the company for the manner in which the *nominis umbra* had been received—and to assure them that the Author of Waverley would,

when informed of the circumstance, feel highly delighted —" the proudest hour of his life," &c. &c. The cool demure fun of Scott's features during all this mummery was perfect; and Erskine's attempt at a gay *nonchalance* was still more ludicrously meritorious. Aldiborontiphoscophornio, however, bursting as he was, knew too well to allow the new novel to be made the subject of discussion. Its name was announced, and success to it crowned another cup; but after that, no more of Jedediah. To cut the thread, he rolled out unbidden some one of his many theatrical songs, in a style that would have done no dishonour to almost any orchestra—The *Maid of Lodi*—or perhaps, *The Bay of Biscay, oh!*—or *The sweet little cherub that sits up aloft.* Other toasts followed, interspersed with ditties from other performers;—old George Thomson, the friend of Burns, was ready, for one, with *The Moorland Wedding*, or *Willie brew'd a peck o' maut;*—and so it went on, until Scott and Erskine, with any clerical or very staid personage that had chanced to be admitted, saw fit to withdraw. Then the scene was changed. The claret and olives made way for broiled bones and a mighty bowl of punch; and when a few glasses of the hot beverage had restored his powers, James opened *ore rotundo* on the merits of the forthcoming romance. " One chapter—one chapter only"—was the cry. After " *Nay, by'r Lady, nay!*" and a few more coy shifts, the proof-sheets were at length produced, and James, with many a prefatory hem, read aloud what he considered as the most striking dialogue they contained.

The first I heard so read was the interview between Jeanie Deans, the Duke of Argyle, and Queen Caroline, in Richmond Park; and notwithstanding some spice of the pompous tricks to which he was addicted, I must say he did the inimitable scene great justice. At all events, the effect it produced was deep and memorable, and no wonder that the exulting typographer's *one bumper more to Jedediah*

Cleishbotham preceded his parting stave, which was uniformly *The Last Words of Marmion*, executed certainly with no contemptible rivalry of Braham.

What a different affair was a dinner, although probably including many of the same guests, at the junior partner's! He in those days retained, I think, no private apartments attached to his auction-rooms in Hanover Street, over the door of which he still kept emblazoned "John Ballantyne and Company, Booksellers." At any rate, such of his entertainments as I ever saw Scott partake of, were given at his villa near to the Frith of Forth, by Trinity;—a retreat which the little man had invested with an air of dainty voluptuous finery, contrasting strikingly enough with the substantial citizen-like snugness of his elder brother's domestic appointments. His house was surrounded by gardens so contrived as to seem of considerable extent, having many a shady tuft, trellised alley, and mysterious alcove, interspersed among their bright parterres. His professional excursions to Paris and Brussels in quest of objects of *vertu*, had supplied both the temptation and the means to set forth the interior in a fashion that might have satisfied the most fastidious *petite maitresse* of Norwood or St Denis. John, too, was a married man: he had, however, erected for himself a private wing, the accesses to which, whether from the main building or the bosquet, were so narrow that it was physically impossible for the handsome and portly lady who bore his name to force her person through any one of them. His dinners were in all respects Parisian, for his wasted palate disdained such John Bull luxuries as were all in all with James. The piquant pasty of Strasburg or Perigord was never to seek; and even the *pièce de résistance* was probably a boar's head from Coblentz, or a turkey ready stuffed with truffles from the Palais Royal. The pictures scattered among John's innumerable mirrors were chiefly of theatrical subjects—many of them portraits of beautiful actresses—the same

Peg Woffingtons, Bellamys, Kitty Clives, and so forth, that found their way in the sequel to Charles Mathews's gallery at Highgate. Here that exquisite comedian's own mimicries and parodies were the life and soul of many a festival, and here, too, he gathered from his facetious host not a few of the richest materials for his *at homes* and *monopolylogues*. But, indeed, whatever actor or singer of eminence visited Edinburgh, of the evenings when he did not perform several were sure to be reserved for Trinity. Here Braham quavered, and here Liston drolled his best —here Johnstone, and Murray, and Yates, mixed jest and stave—here Kean revelled and rioted—and here the Roman Kemble often played the Greek from sunset to dawn. Nor did the popular *danseuse* of the time disdain to freshen her roses, after a laborious week, amidst these Paphian arbours.

Johnny had other tastes that were equally expensive. He had a well-furnished stable, and followed the fox-hounds whenever the covert was within an easy distance. His horses were all called after heroes in Scott's poems or novels; and at this time he usually rode up to his auction on a tall milk-white hunter, yclept *Old Mortality*, attended by a leash or two of greyhounds,—Die Vernon, Jenny Dennison, and so forth, by name. The featherweight himself appeared uniformly, hammer-in-hand, in the half-dress of some sporting-club—a light grey frock, with emblems of the chase on its silver buttons, white cord breeches, and jockey-boots in Meltonian order. Yet he affected in the pulpit rather a grave address; and was really one of the most plausible and imposing of the Puff tribe. Probably Scott's presence overawed his ludicrous propensities; for the poet was, when sales were going on, almost a daily attendant in Hanover Street, and himself not the least energetic of the numerous competitors for Johnny's uncut *fifteeners*, Venetian lamps, Milanese cuirasses, and old Dutch cabinets. Maida, by the way, was so well aware of his

master's habits, that about the time when the Court of Session was likely to break up for the day, he might usually be seen couched in expectation among Johnny's own *tail* of greyhounds at the threshold of the mart.

It was at one of those Trinity dinners this summer that I first saw Constable. Being struck with his appearance, I asked Scott who he was, and he told me—expressing some surprise that anybody should have lived a winter or two in Edinburgh without knowing, by sight at least, a citizen whose name was so familiar to the world. I happened to say that I had not been prepared to find the great bookseller a man of such gentlemanlike and even distinguished bearing. Scott smiled, and answered—"Ay, Constable is indeed a grand-looking chield. He puts me in mind of Fielding's apology for Lady Booby—to wit, that Joseph Andrews had an air which, to those who had not seen many noblemen, would give an idea of nobility." I had not in those days been much initiated in the private jokes of what is called, by way of excellence, *the trade*, and was puzzled when Scott, in the course of the dinner, said to Constable, "Will your Czarish Majesty do me the honour to take a glass of champaign?" I asked the master of the feast for an explanation. "Oh!" said he, "are you so green as not to know that Constable long since dubbed himself *The Czar of Muscovy*, John Murray *The Emperor of the West*, and Longman and his string of partners *The Divan?*"—"And what title," I asked, "has Mr John Ballantyne himself found in this new *almanach imperial?*"—"Let that flee stick to the wa'," quoth Johnny: "When I set up for a bookseller, The Crafty christened me *The Dey of Alljeers*—but he now considers me as next thing to dethroned." He added—"His Majesty the autocrat is too fond of these nicknames. One day a partner of the house of Longman was dining with him in the country, to settle an important piece of business, about which there occurred a good deal of difficulty. 'What

fine swans you have in your pond there!' said the Londoner, by way of parenthesis.—'Swans!' cried Constable; 'they are only geese, man. There are just five of them, if you please to observe, and their names are Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, and Brown.' This skit cost The Crafty a good bargain."

It always appeared to me that James Ballantyne felt his genius rebuked in the presence of Constable: his manner was constrained, his smile servile, his hilarity elaborate. Not so with Johnny: the little fellow never seemed more airily frolicsome than when he capered for the amusement of the Czar.

When I visited Constable, as I often did at a period somewhat later than that of which I now speak, and for the most part in company with Scott, I found the bookseller established in a respectable country gentleman's seat, some six or seven miles out of Edinburgh, and doing the honours of it with all the ease that might have been looked for had he been the long-descended owner of the place; —there was no foppery, no show, no idle luxury, but to all appearance the plain abundance and simple enjoyment of hereditary wealth. His conversation was manly and vigorous, abounding in Scotch anecdotes of the old time, which he told with a degree of spirit and humour only second to his great author's. No man could more effectually control, when he had a mind, either the extravagant vanity which, on too many occasions, made him ridiculous, or the despotic temper which habitually held in fear and trembling all such as were in any sort dependent on his Czarish Majesty's pleasure. In him I never saw (at this period) anything but the unobtrusive sense and the calm courtesy of a well-bred gentleman. His very equipage kept up the series of contrasts between him and the two Ballantynes. Constable went back and forward between the town and Polton in a deep hung and capacious green barouche, without any pretence at heraldic blazonry, drawn by a pair of sleek, black, long-tailed horses,

and conducted by a grave old coachman in plain blue livery. The Printer of the Canongate drove himself and his wife about the streets and suburbs in a snug machine, which did not overburthen one powerful and steady cob;—while the gay Auctioneer, whenever he left the saddle for the box, mounted a bright blue dog-cart, and rattled down the Newhaven road with two high-mettled steeds prancing *tandem* before him.

The Sheriff told with peculiar unction the following anecdote of this spark:—The first time he went over to pick up curiosities at Paris, it happened that he met, in the course of his traffickings, a certain brother bookseller of Edinburgh, as unlike him as one man could well be to another—a grave, dry Presbyterian, rigid in all his notions as the buckle of his wig. This precise worthy having ascertained John's address, went to call on him a day or two afterwards, with the news of some richly illuminated missal, which he might possibly be glad to make prize of. On asking for his friend, a smiling *laquais de place* informed him that *Monsieur* had gone out, but that *Madame* was at home. Not doubting that Mrs Ballantyne had accompanied her husband on his trip, he desired to pay his respects to *Madame*, and was ushered in accordingly. "But oh, Mr Scott!" said, or rather groaned the austere elder on his return from this modern Babylon—"oh, Mr Scott, there was nae Mrs John yonder, but a painted Jezabel sittin' up in her bed, wi' a wheen impudent French limmers like hersel', and twa or three whiskered blackguards, takin' their collation o' nicknacks and champagne wine. I ran out o' the house as if I had been shot. What judgment will this wicked warld come to! The Lord pity us!" Scott was a severe enough censor in the general of such levities, but somehow, in the case of Rigdumfunnidos, he seemed to regard them with much the same toleration as the naughty tricks of a monkey in the "Jardin des Plantes."

Why did Scott persist in mixing up all his most impor-

tant concerns with these Ballantynes? The reader of these pages will have all my materials for an answer; but in the meantime let it suffice to say, that he was the most patient, long-suffering, affectionate, and charitable of mankind; that in the case of both the brothers he could count, after all, on a sincerely, nay, a passionately devoted attachment to his person; that, with the greatest of human beings, use is in all but unconquerable power; and that he who so loftily tossed aside the seemingly most dangerous assaults of flattery, the blandishment of dames, the condescension of princes, the enthusiasm of crowds—had still his weak point, upon which two or three humble besiegers, and one unwearied, though most frivolous underminer, well knew how to direct their approaches. It was a favourite saw of his own, that the wisest of our race often reserve the average stock of folly to be all expended upon some one flagrant absurdity.

I alluded to James Ballantyne's reading of the famous scene in Richmond Park. According to Scott's original intention, the second series of *Jedediah* was to have included two tales; but his Jeanie Deans soon grew so on his fancy as to make this impossible; and the Heart of Mid-Lothian alone occupied the four volumes which appeared in June 1818, and were at once placed by acclamation in the foremost rank of his writings. Lady Louisa Stuart's picture of the southern rapture may be found elsewhere; but I must not omit here her own remarks on the principal character:—"People were beginning to say the author would wear himself out; it was going on too long in the same key, and no striking notes could possibly be produced. On the contrary, I think the interest is stronger here than in any of the former ones—(always excepting my first-love Waverley)—and one may congratulate you upon having effected what many have tried to do, and nobody yet succeeded in, making the perfectly good character the most interesting. Of late days, especially since it has been the

fashion to write moral and even religious novels, one might almost say of some of the wise good heroines, what a lively girl once said of her well-meaning aunt—'Upon my word she is enough to make anybody wicked.' And though beauty and talents are heaped on the right side, the writer, in spite of himself, is sure to put agreeableness on the wrong; the person from whose errors he means you should take warning, runs away with your secret partiality in the meantime. Had this very story been conducted by a common hand, Effie would have attracted our concern and sympathy—Jeanie only cold approbation. Whereas Jeanie, without youth, beauty, genius, warm passions, or any other novel-perfection, is here our object from beginning to end. This is 'enlisting the affections in the cause of virtue' ten times more than ever Richardson did; for whose male and female pedants, all-excelling as they are, I never could care half so much as I found myself inclined to do for Jeanie before I finished the first volume."

From the choice of localities, and the splendid blazoning of tragical circumstances that had left the strongest impression on the memory and imagination of every inhabitant, the reception of this tale in Edinburgh was a scene of all-engrossing enthusiasm, such as I never witnessed there on the appearance of any other literary novelty. But the admiration and delight were the same all over Scotland. Never before had he seized such really noble features of the national character as were canonized in the person of his homely heroine: no art had ever devised a happier running contrast than that of her and her sister, or interwoven a portraiture of lowly manners and simple virtues, with more graceful delineations of polished life, or with bolder shadows of terror, guilt, crime, remorse, madness, and all the agony of the passions.

END OF VOLUME FIRST.

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